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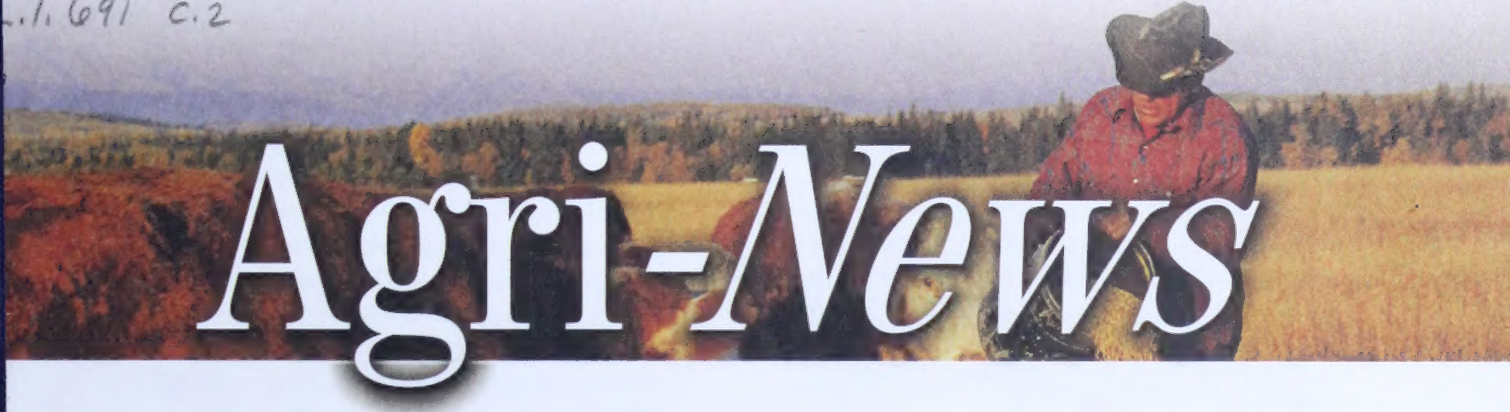

# Agri-News

January 7, 2002

## Norway rats could be hiding in imported bales

This is the time of year when livestock feed and bedding is delivered into Alberta from points east. The volume imported into the province depends upon Alberta's feedstock inventory. With this year's drought in many parts of the province, it appears the tonnage will be much higher than usual. Livestock producers from as far as south central Alberta and as far north as Athabasca will likely be purchasing more feed and straw than usual.

"The movement of feed from Saskatchewan and Manitoba into Alberta usually prompts several questions regarding Norway rats," says John Bourne, vertebrate pest specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Vermilion. "Alberta is rat-free, while the two provinces east of us are not. The most often asked questions are usually regarding the chances of a Norway rat being inadvertently brought into the province on a shipment of feed. Another is how to tell if there is a rat on board a truckload of feed. Albertans usually also want to know what to do if a rat is found on a load of feed."

First of all, it is very likely that a live rat could be delivered into the province, and the higher the volume of feed being imported the greater the risk. Because drought has resulted in lower than normal feed crops, there will probably be much more feed shipped here and, therefore greater chances of rats being brought in as well. The type of feed being imported is certainly a consideration because rats prefer green feed bales and straw bales to hay bales.

"Rats usually burrow into bales and are not easily detected; nonetheless, there should be some sign of their presence," adds Bourne.

Bourne advises to watch for the following telltale signs:

- **Droppings** - rats produce 25 to 40 droppings per day so there should be droppings even if the rats have travelled only a single day. Fresh droppings are conspicuously large, measuring up to 3/4 of an inch in length, nearly 1/4 inch in diameter, black or dark coloured and blunt or round at both ends.
- **Chewing** - rats are capable chewing through almost any material, but in feed bales their holes are obvious and will appear almost perfectly round measuring at least two inches in diameter. Field mice also burrow into bales but their holes are much smaller.

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- **The Norway rat** - The body of an adult rat measures approximately seven to nine inches long from nose tip to base of tail. A male adult can weigh up to one pound; females slightly less. The tail is usually about five to seven inches long, never as long as its body. The distinctive tail is a dead giveaway. It's cylindrically shaped like a rope, is hairless except for short bristles and is tapered from base to tip. A muskrat has a long tail but it is flat along the sides and has a ridge along the top for swimming; much different than a Norway rat.

  Rats are tan to brown coloured with black hairs throughout on top and buff or creamy coloured underneath. Rats have very delicate, small front and hind feet that are pink in colour. The upper sides of the feet are covered with fine white or creamy coloured hair. They have very short claws. Pocket gophers, ground squirrels and muskrats have much larger feet that are generally darker in colour and have darker hair on the upper sides.

If a rat or a suspicious rodent is found on board a load of feed, collect any physical evidence. Preserve the evidence by placing it in a plastic bag inside a solid container, such as an ice cream pail, and freeze it so that it can be properly identified. For further information or assistance, call your local municipal fieldmen.

*Contact: John Bourne*
*(780) 853-8225*

## Where's the fruit?

An increasing number of consumers are asking where they can purchase Alberta fruit. Demand for fresh Alberta-grown berries continues to out-strip supply, and calls to consumer lines increase each year as the season progresses. Numerous farmers and acreage holders have been taking up the challenge to meet this demand in recent years, but there remains much opportunity for additional producers to enter the industry.

"Consumers are driving this demand," says Lloyd Hausher, provincial fruit crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South, Brooks. "Many of the consumers are baby boomers who have the means and the desire to seek out locally produced, nutritious, top quality produce. Many young consumers have been educated on the values of nutrition and the benefits of knowing who is producing their food and how it is being produced. Additionally, the personal service provided at pick-your-own operations and farmers' markets is becoming more important than the price of produce."

As the demand for fresh, top quality, locally grown produce continues to rise, so does the opportunity for Alberta's established and prospective berry producers. The three most sought after direct market fruit crops are strawberries, raspberries and saskatoons. Additional berry crops, including currants, gooseberries and cherries, are produced in limited number and may be location specific.

"Because of the potential profitability of berry production combined with a readily available market, the berry industry has enjoyed a rapid growth over the last 15 years," adds Hausher. "From being nearly non-existent 15 years ago, the industry was estimated in year 2000 at approximately $10 million farm gate value."

Most of Alberta's direct-market berry industry is pick-your-own or u-pick based. This reduces harvest labor, but field supervision is required. Ready-picked sales at farmers' markets, the farm gate and berry stands are also increasing.

Despite marketing methods, the most common comment that growers make at the end of the season is that they ran out of berries before customers.

"Producers have obtained a very good return to investment by producing berries," says Hausher. "Very little capital input is required, as machinery requirement is minimal. With the cooperation of Mother Nature, and some instinctive or acquired management knowledge, not a lot of acres are required to produce a good income."

Proximity to large urban centers (customers) is most important if looking to start a direct market berry farm. Water for irrigation, shelter (permanent or temporary), soil and topography are also important considerations.

New varietal developments have provided the Alberta consumer the opportunity to enjoy fresh picked local strawberries and raspberries from early July to September and possibly October. Developments in production techniques ensure the producer top yield performance, and the consumer a premium quality berry.

Persons wanting to learn more about this rapidly expanding industry or obtain information on production of these crops, may want to attend the upcoming ***Commercial Berry Production School*** being held at the Cedar Park Inn, Edmonton, on February 5 to 6, 2002. This 16th annual event will cover general requirements of establishing a commercial berry farm, where to look for additional information, and the specifics of producing strawberries, raspberries and saskatoons for direct market sales.

Registration for the two-day event is $75 per person for Alberta Market Gardeners Association (AMGA) members and $100 for non-members. Registration at the door is available and will be $90 per person for AMGA members and $120 for non-members. Single day rates, both advance and at the door are available. For further information, contact Hausher at (403) 362-1309.

*Contact: Lloyd Hausher*
*(403) 362-1309 Fax (403) 362-1306*

*Cont'd on page 3*

## Reasons not to top trees

Topping trees is the indiscriminate cutting back of tree branches to form stubs, or the cutting of lateral branches that are not large enough to form terminal branches. It goes by several names; heading, tipping, hat-racking, rounding over, stubbing and dehorning. Whatever the name, it is the most harmful and invasive form of pruning there is.

"People top trees for a variety of reasons," says Shelley Barkley, information officer at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South, Brooks. "The most common reason for topping is that the tree has become very large and the homeowner is worried about the tree or a branch of the tree falling on their house, another property or even perhaps a person. Often, homeowners want to keep the size of their trees contained. Trees are also topped when they interfere with utility lines, buildings, garden spots or a view."

Topping upsets the crown to root ratio; the tree's food-producing potential and food stores are impacted. Topping may remove 50 to 100 per cent of the leaf-producing crown of the tree; leaves are the food factories. Removing this much leaf tissue can temporarily starve the tree. Food is stored in the twigs and limbs, so removing branches decreases the tree's food reserves. Removal of the terminal buds directly impacts the root-inducing hormones, affecting the tree's ability to form new nutrient and moisture absorbing roots.

"Branches produce thousands of leaves," explains Barkley. "When branches are removed, the remaining branches and trunk are exposed to high levels of light and heat. This can cause sunscald, which can lead to cankers, bark splitting and even branch death. There is also an effect on the surrounding vegetation. Plants that thrived in the shade are now exposed to full sun, a detriment to their health and vigor."

Topping leaves behind large ugly branches and limb stubs that seldom heal properly. These wounds attract insects, drawn by the chemical signals emitted by the tree, and decay fungi. These factors shorten a tree's life. If there is decay already present, opening the limb up will speed the spread of the disease. Water also accumulates in the cut areas, further inciting the decay. Branches may become hollow, or internal columns of rotten wood can form.

"The tree activates latent buds around the pruning cut, forming dense brush-like witches' brooms of water sprouts," says Barkley. "Unlike the branches that normally form on the tree, these new shoots are only tied into the outermost layers of the parent branches. These witches' brooms can grow as much as 20 feet in a year and are very prone to breaking in wind and snowstorms. The tree can become top heavy and be more likely to catch the wind, increasing the chance of wind blow-down. So, instead of making the tree safer, topping the tree can cause it to become a greater hazard."

A topped tree will grow faster and will soon be taller and denser with lots of small, structurally weak branches. Some trees will not recover from the topping operation and will die. Topped trees require pruning every few years to reduced them in size again, or to remove storm-damaged wood and, of course, if the tree dies it will have to be removed.

"The branching habit of each tree species in unique," adds Barkley. "The goal of the growth habit is to present leaf surfaces to the sun. Topping destroys this beautiful natural form. Living in a part of the world where trees are naked for up to eight months, topped trees appear disfigured and mutilated. Even with leaves, topped trees will never have the beautiful structure they are genetically programmed to have. Topping trees robs the landscape of a beautiful and valuable asset."

If the tree has become a safety concern and there is a fear that it will fall, perhaps the best solution is to remove the tree and replace it with a smaller stature tree. The same thing applies if a tree is too big or is interfering with vistas or utility lines. The best advice - if pruning a large tree is in your future, hire a certified arborist to do the job. These are the people that can do it properly. A properly pruned tree looks so natural that no one can tell it has been pruned.

*Contact:* *Shelley Barkley*
*(403) 362-1305*

## New director named to WCFRI

Don Scheer is the new acting director of the Western Canada Feed Research Institute (WCFRI), University of Alberta. Scheer's appointment is for one year ending 30 September 2002.

Scheer, an Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development employee, has extensive experience working with western Canada's livestock and feed industries. He has held several management positions, including head of the Animal Nutrition Section, the Beef Cattle and Sheep Branch, the Sheep and Diversified Livestock Group and administrator of the Crow Benefit Offset Program.

Scheer's most recent position was a four-year, industry secondment to Agriteam Canada Consulting Ltd. As a project manager with the company, he managed the very successful China Feed Industry Centre Project at the China Agriculture University in Beijing. The project was funded by the Canadian International Development Agency, the World Bank and the People's Republic of China. It established a centre of excellence for the China feed industry.

The vision of the WCFRI is to become a centre of excellence and be recognized as a world leader in feed science and technology. The institute's goals will focus on developing rapid and reliable analytical methods, improving feed evaluation

*Cont'd on page 4*

techniques, developing innovative feed products and processing technologies and developing training programs for feed industry stakeholders.

"Enhancing the partnership with the University of Alberta through the establishment of the Western Canadian Feed Research Institute is evidence of our unqualified commitment to growing the agriculture and food industry in Alberta," says Brian Rhiness, Assistant Deputy Minister, Industry Development Sector, Alberta Agriculture. "The provincial government has made a significant commitment of $1.0 million toward the establishment of the WCFRI. Alberta Agriculture and the University will leverage these dollars by combining appropriate scientific and technical resources to support the activities of the institute."

"I look forward to working with Don," adds Dr. John Kennelly, professor and Chair of the University of Alberta's Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutritional Science (AFNS). "His strong management and leadership skills and his recent experience in China will serve the WCFRI well as it progresses towards the operational phase of implementation."

"This is an exciting opportunity for the feed and animal industries and I'm anxious to get started," says Scheer. "Although there are similar feed technology centres in other countries, such as the Netherlands, France and the US, there is nothing quite like the WCFRI in Canada. With strong industry involvement, there is an opportunity for us to create competitive innovations and sustainable solutions through superior science."

*Contact:* *H.D. (Don) Scheer*
*(780) 492-5130 Fax: (780) 492-4265*
*Email: don.scheer@ualberta.ca*

## AOC and AFSC merger proceeding

The Alberta government is proceeding with plans to merge Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC) and Alberta Opportunity Company (AOC). The merger will build on the business strengths of both corporations and save an estimated $1 million annually.

"The government intends to introduce legislation in spring 2002 that will formalize the merger," says Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "Meanwhile, both organizations are working together to ensure a smooth transition on behalf of the small business and agriculture clients they serve.

"AOC and AFSC are strong organizations with dedicated staff and proud histories. By reducing administration and combining the strengths of both organizations, we will be able to enhance delivery of made-in-Alberta financial solutions."

AFSC serves Alberta's agri-industry through 50 offices throughout the province. Its business centres on insurance and income protection, farm lending and commercial financing. AOC serves Alberta's small business sector through 10 offices, providing financing to viable small businesses when it is unavailable from conventional sources. The two companies serve more than 25,000 small business and farm clients, and both corporations report to the Agriculture Minister. The services of AOC and AFSC will continue under the merged company, Agriculture Financial Services Corporation.

Directors have been appointed to serve concurrently on both AFSC and AOC boards until legislation is passed. Appointed were existing AFSC directors Bob Splane (Chair), Lynn Dechant, Eugene Dextrase, Aaron Falkenberg, Bernard Kotelko, Gerard Oosterhuis and existing AOC directors Barry Holmes and Wayne Wagner. Arthur Froelich, a member of the public, also was appointed. McClellan conveyed her thanks to departing board members Thomas Bugg, James Cumming, Paul Evaskevich, Lawrence Gordon, David Hardy, Bob Hymas, Michael Procter and Louise Severin.

"Small business and the agriculture industry are strong contributors to the Alberta economy, especially in rural Alberta," McClellan adds. "The Alberta government will continue to invest in our entrepreneurial spirit by providing meaningful and unique financial services not readily available from conventional sources."

*Contact:* *Andrew Church*
*Acting President*
*Agriculture Financial Services Corporation*
*(403) 782-8225*

*Gerry McCracken*
*Manager, Corporate Development*
*Alberta Opportunity Company*
*(403) 783-7006*

*Terry Willock*
*Director, Communications*
*Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development*
*(780) 422-7683*

Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton

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# Agri-News Briefs

## Olds swine stockhandlers' workshop

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Olds College, Gencor, and Minitube are hosting the annual ***Swine Stockhandlers'*** workshop on January 22, 2002. The workshop, especially designed for barn staff working with the breeding herd, will focus on practices to improve conception rate. Guest speakers include: John Behan, swine management consultant, known for research with boars and new technologies to improve breeding herd performance; Mark Wilson, vice president of Minitube of America, who is researching new advances in semen freezing, embryo transfer and insemination; and, Heather Willis, research scientist with Alberta Agriculture, her work focuses on gilt pool management and sow fertility. Participants can expect interactive problem-solving work as part of the workshop. No live animals will be used. This interactive workshop will be held from 1:00 to 4:30 p.m. in Room 614 Animal Science at Olds College. The registration fee is $40 per person for the first person from a farm and $35 per person for each additional person from the same operation. For more information or to register, contact Michelle Follensbee (780) 415-0828 (toll free via 310-000), fax: (780) 427-1057 or e-mail <michelle.follensbee@gov.ab.ca>.

## National Ag Institute of Canada conference

The Agricultural Institute of Canada Foundation's national conference on ***Agricultural Nutrients and Their Impact on Rural Water Quality*** is being held in Waterloo, Ontario, on April 28 to 30, 2002. Details regarding abstract submission are on the conference web site <http://www.aic.ca/aicf/conference>.

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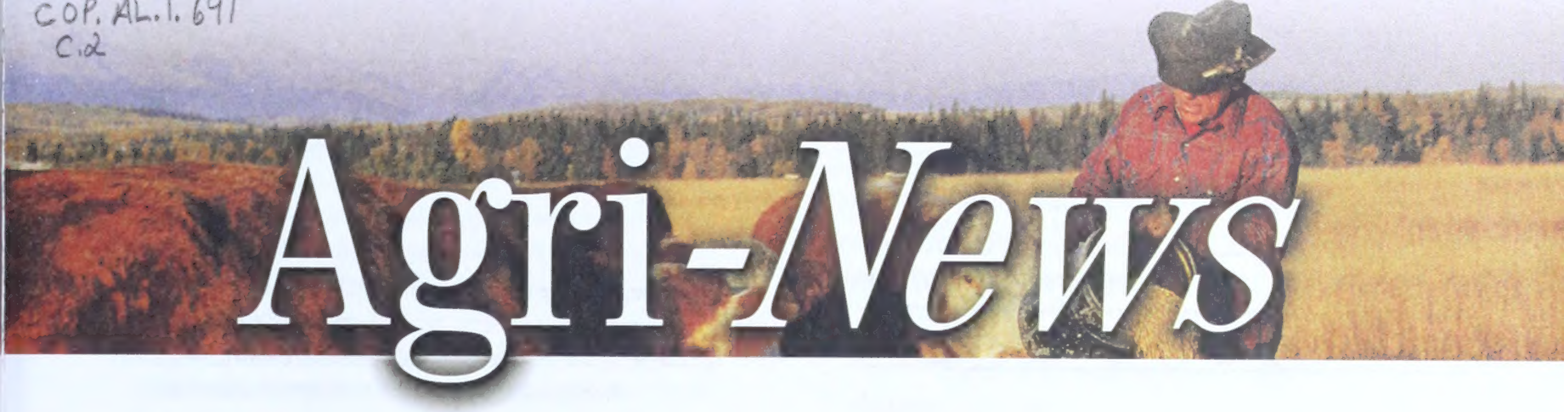

# Agri-News

January 14, 2002

## Aromatic and medicinal plant conference

The 6th Annual Western Canadian Medicinal and Aromatic Plant conference is being held in Brandon, Manitoba. ***Sharing the Knowledge 2002*** is the theme of the conference being held on February 13 to 15, 2002 at the Royal Oak Inn, Brandon, Manitoba.

"Last year, the conference was held in Alberta in conjunction with the Growing Global conference," says Dr. Stan Blade, unit leader of new crop development and director of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre North, Edmonton. "Over 300 people attended the 5th Medicinal and Aromatic Plant conference and I'm sure it will be equally successful in 2002. Presentations scheduled for the 2002 conference will cover several different business challenges, such as producing, processing and marketing medicinal and aromatic plants and nutraceuticals."

This conference is the foremost gathering of innovative farmers, processors and brokers in western Canada. Presenters include:

- Theresa Reid, Botanicals International, vice president of Materials Management, Long Beach, California, North American buyer
- Barbara Letchworth, Frontier Coop, botanical buyer, Iowa
- Wanda Wolf, Lone Wolf Enterprises, Saskatchewan
- Ed Fletcher, buyer, North Carolina
- Steven Foster, Herbal Gram, associate editor, Arkansas

Business and marketing opportunities associated with the aromatic and medicinal plant and nutraceutical industry are increasing. Growers of many different botanicals, such as echinacea, St. John's wart, culinary herbs, dandelion, feverfew, milk thistle, mint, valerian, burdock, hemp nettle, flax oil, coriander and caraway, will be interested in this conference.

Funding for this conference is in part provided by the Canadian Adaptation and Rural Development (CARD) Councils of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Colombia through the Agriculture and AgriFood Canada Card Fund.

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For further information or to register, contact conference organizers:

- Bob Shearer, chairman MAPAM, (204) 229-3967
- Sandra Ross, Manitoba Herb Society, (204) 757-9868
- Markus Schmulgen, Food Development Centre, (204) 239-3150 or toll free in Canada at 1-800-970-1044.

*Contact:* *Dr. Stan Blade* *Bob Shearer*
*(780) 415-2311* *(204) 229-3967*

## Direct seeding web site

The Reduced Tillage LINKAGES (RTL) web site, <www.reducedtillage.ca> was launched on November 14, 2001 at the Direct Seeding Advantage conference. The site was designed to increase the access to and add value to sustainable cropping information.

RTL, with the help of two farmer focus groups and Mirza Baig, former Monsanto research scientist, designed the web site for farmers. A knowledge management approach is being used to provide information. There is plenty of good reduced tillage information available - managing it, capturing it and making that knowledge easily available, quick to read, as well as current is the idea behind the web site. It's a way to reduce the information glut and get to the critical information.

"One of the key features of the site is the ***Knowledge Tidbit*** section," says Peter Gamache, RTL team leader, Edmonton. "We have developed a number of categories of information such as economics, residue management, crop rotations and others. Clicking on one of the categories takes you to a summary page of the topic. At a quick glance, you can see the key bits of knowledge on the topic. Links are provided for further and more detailed information. Over time links with some of the key sustainable cropping researchers in western Canada will be developed."

The ***Feature Farmer*** section of the site profiles successful direct seeders. The first feature is on Tony Brummelhuis and how he uses residue management to successfully seed with his John Deere 750 drill on irrigated land.

The site also has links to good reduced tillage sites, RTL agronomists, and RTL partners. Information and a form for RTL's Farmer to Farmer Network are also available. The search and register for update features will be activated soon.

"RTL is working hard to add value to sustainable cropping information and to provide a site that loads fast over rural lines," adds Gamache.

*Contact:* *Peter Gamache* *Mirza Baig*
*(780) 422-7922* *(780) 427-4424*

## Raising fish in a pond or dugout

***Raising Fish in Your Pond or Dugout*** is a course for anyone interested in raising fish for recreational purposes. The course, organized by Alberta Fish Farmers Association in cooperation with Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development, provides an overview of specific requirements for raising fish.

"Course topics include selecting a site and constructing a fish pond; licensing requirements; purchasing fish and supplies; feeding; water quality; aeration; and, disease, predator and weed control," says Eric Hutchings, aquaculture specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Lethbridge. "There will be speakers from the Alberta Fish Farmers Association and Alberta Agriculture who will share specialized knowledge and direct experience at the workshop."

In addition to classroom instruction, participants will have the opportunity to view various fish culture and aeration equipment, and speak directly with the industry representatives. This can include commercial fingerling suppliers, licensing inspectors and department staff from Animal Industry's Aquaculture Section.

***Raising Fish in your Pond or Dugout*** is a three-hour course held at six different locations throughout Alberta this winter. The 2002 schedule of dates, locations, and tentative times is as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Feb 5 | Stony Plain |
| Feb 6 | Westlock |
| Feb 12 | Tofield |
| Feb 13 | Wetaskiwin |
| Feb 26 | Airdrie |
| Feb 27 | Lacombe |

Attendance is limited by seating capacity. Courses with less than 10 pre-registrants will be cancelled. Cost of the course is $25 (including GST). A manual is provided to registrants and contains additional materials not covered in class. Please make cheques payable to the Alberta Fish Farmers Association and include a completed registration form.

Details on course registration should be directed to the sponsoring district office of Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development.

For information about this or other aquaculture-related courses, contact Hutchings at (403) 381-5574, toll free by dialing 310-0000 and then the number.

*Contact:* *Eric Hutchings*
*(403) 381-5574*

*Cont'd on page 3*

## New livestock regulatory framework protects Albertans

On January 1, 2002, the Government of Alberta introduced a new provincial regulatory framework for confined feeding operations (CFOs). CFOs, commonly referred to as intensive livestock operations, are fenced or enclosed areas where livestock are confined for the purpose of feeding.

All proposals for new or expanding CFOs will now be reviewed for approval by the Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) to ensure they meet required standards. The NRCB also assumes responsibility for the monitoring and enforcement of province-wide requirements for all CFOs, as well as ensuring that existing agricultural operations comply with standards for manure management.

As the NRCB gears up for its new role, it will be phasing-in various aspects of its regulatory operations. The NRCB's new regulatory framework includes four regional offices. Approvals Officers and Inspectors, operating out of Barrhead, Lethbridge, Red Deer and Fairview, will provide a smooth transition for handling applications, assisting producers and addressing stakeholder concerns.

As a regulator, the Board is in a unique position to hear and respond to concerns about confined feeding operations. Using a priority response system, NRCB inspectors will be available to address and investigate complaints. The public can call the NRCB's response line at 1-866-383-6722 (1-866-383-NRCB) if they have a concern about an existing operation. Priority will be placed on complaints that point to an immediate or potential risk to the environment, demonstrated non-compliance or significant nuisance.

Over the next year, the NRCB will be reviewing its plans and operations to make sure it's meeting Albertans' expectations in the livestock industry area. The NRCB will also be working with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Alberta Environment, the Farmers' Advocate, the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, and all its stakeholders to make the transition to the new regulatory environment as seamless as possible.

This expansion of the NRCB's mandate reflects Albertan's desire for an economically sound, sustainable livestock industry, and strong protections for air, water and soil. It also reflects the need for a consistent, science-based decision making process, and consistently applied and enforced province-wide standards.

The NRCB is committed to its role of ensuring the sustainable, equitable and responsible development of Alberta's natural resources, and ensuring that any development that occurs is in the public interest.

More information on the NRCB's application, public review, and inspection and enforcement processes for CFOs is available on the NRCB's web site at <www.nrcb.gov.ab.ca> by following the link for ***Confined Feeding Operations***.

*Contact:* *Eileen Kahler*
*NRCB Communications*
*(403) 297-8144*
*(403) 297-3757*
*E-mail: eileen.kahler@gov.ab.ca*

## Farm direct marketing workshop

Albertans interested in starting a farm direct marketing business but who aren't sure where to start will want to attend one of the two-day workshops being hosted by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. The workshops will introduce and provide a basic understanding of market research concepts as well as information on regulations, on-farm food safety, insurance, transportation, distribution and promotion.

"The afternoon sessions of both days will give attendees a chance to listen to some industry players," says Eileen Kotowich, rural development specialist-business, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Vermilion. "Both producers and industry experts willing to share their experiences and insights into developing a farm direct marketing operation will be making presentations. One of the guest speakers is Leona Staples who, along with her husband Blaine, owns and operates The Jungle, located just outside Innisfail."

The Jungle cooperatively markets strawberries and vegetables, offers a u-pick operation and is expanding into agri-tourism. The Staples came back to the family's century farm in 1996 and joined with Innisfail Growers to initially produce strawberries. Innisfail Growers consists of five local families who collectively market their produce weekly at 25 different farmers' markets. This exposure resulted in additional requests for larger quantities of berries and prompted Blaine and Leona to offer a u-pick operation by expanding from one half of an acre of strawberries to six acres.

In addition to the u-pick, they have also expanded to offer school and youth tours. This opportunity has allowed them to share their positive image of agriculture. They teach children how the fruits and vegetables are grown and show them how weather conditions such as drought or hail affect their crops. By teaching the children, they feel they can positively influence people to have a different perspective of agriculture.

"The Staples have also worked with the Innisfail Historical Village to promote a ***Strawberry Festival and Fiddlers' Jamboree***," adds Kotowich. "Along with George, their mascot,

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they sell fresh strawberries and promote their farm. This exposure resulted in requests to accommodate adult bus tours. During 2001. The Jungle hosted their own festival – ***Strawberry Jam and Moonlight Pick Out*** – on the last day/evening of the strawberry season. Following the day's activities, people were given flashlights and told to pick strawberries - it all started at 10:00 p.m."

Leona Staples says they attend the Alberta Horticultural Congress where they pick up many great ideas from other producers. She credits much of their exposure to Innisfail Growers. They also start small with all new projects - just to test the market and to iron out any wrinkles before expanding further.

Anyone interested in learning more about starting their own farm direct marketing operation, are welcome to attend one of these workshops being offered in Camrose on February 27, 2002 and March 6, 2002 and in Westlock on February 28, 2002 and March 7, 2002. For more information, contact Marian Williams in Camrose at (780) 679-1210, Kerry Engel in Westlock at (780) 349-4465 or Kotowich in Vermilion at (780) 853-8223.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Contact:* | *Eileen Kotowich*<br>*(780) 853-8223* | *Kerry Engel*<br>*(780) 349-4465* |

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## *The saskatoon industry is going to school*

The prairie bush fruit industry now touches virtually every rural community in Alberta. It is an industry that has caught on and offers a new opportunity for land-based diversification.

"This amazing Alberta industry is growing successfully and rapidly," says Arnold Malone, president of the Fruit Growers Society of Alberta (FGSA). "In 1999, there were $1.3 million of gross saskatoon sales in Alberta. Projections for 2002 are for $2.6 million and for doubling to $4.5 million by 2004. The prairie bush fruit industry encompasses saskatoons, wild black cherries (chokecherries), red and black currants, sea buckthorn, rhubarb and numerous strawberry and raspberry growers."

Along with these rapid changes in the prairie fruit growing industry is the ongoing need to educate growers, processors and suppliers on production, handling and marketing. Towards that end, the annual Berry School is being held on February 26 and 27, 2002 at the Nisku Business Centre at the Days Inn convention site. "Albertans who have ever considered growing native fruit should not miss this opportunity to learn while networking with other growers," adds Malone.

A broad range of subjects will be discussed that will appeal to those considering entering the industry, the relatively new grower and the well established commercial producer. This year's course work promises an exciting lineup of speakers who will provide current and important information for the industry's stakeholders.

Early bird registration (prior to January 15, 2002) is $160 per FGSA member and $195 per non-member. After January 15, the fee is $175 for members and $200 for non-members. These rates include all seminars, two continental breakfasts, two lunches, the Gala Banquet and trade shows. For persons unable to attend the entire conference, daily rates are available.

Anyone wishing to become a FGSA member may do so by contacting Garnett Eyjolfsson, secretary, FGSA at (403) 742-5742 or e-mail <orchard@telusplanet.net>. An FGSA membership provides many educational advantages and opportunities throughout the year. Check out the FGSA web site at <www.albertafruit.com> for more information.

For further information on the upcoming Berry School or to register, contact Joyce Megson at (403) 748-2289, <megsonj@telusplanet.net> or mail to FGSA Berry School, c/o Joyce Megson, Box 908, Bentley, AB T0C 0J0.

*Contact:* *Arnold Malone*
*(780) 679-2335*

*Cont'd on page 5*

# Agri-News Briefs

## Growing Rural Tourism conference

Moving Forward is the theme of the second annual Growing Rural Tourism conference. The conference, hosted by the Camrose Regional Exhibition, Alberta Economic Development, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and Travel Alberta In-Province, is being held at the Camrose Regional Exhibition on February 11 to 13, 2002. Rural tourism experts and delegates from a cross-section of Alberta's tourism community will share successes, challenges and ideas for future growth of the industry. Speakers include Ed Mahoney, senior Michigan State University professor and a leading rural tourism development expert; Ted Manning, one of Canada's top authorities on planning for sustainable tourism destinations; and, Derek Coke-Kerr, managing director of Travel Alberta. For further information, contact Lisa Houle, Alberta Agriculture, (403) 340-5369 or e-mail <lisa.houle@gov.ab.ca>.

## Go organic!

The ***Going Organic*** team of the Alberta Organic Association is hosting an organic conference at the Capri Centre in Red Deer on March 11 and 12, 2002. The two-day schedule is arranged to focus on organic research and production on day one and take a market focus on day two. Speakers at the conference include Dr. Ralph Martin, director of the Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada, Nova Scotia Agriculture College, Truro, N.S.; Dr. Martin Entz, professor at the University of Manitoba; Dr. Jill Clapperton, rhizosphere ecologist at Agriculture and AgriFood Canada, Lethbridge; Betty Kananen with Global Alliance, Ohio; Katherine Di Matteo, executive director, Organic Trade Association, Greenfield, Massachusetts; Rosalie Cunningham, research officer, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development; and Richard Worth, nSpired Foods, Ft. Meyers, Florida. Participants will not only get to listen to these speakers and others, but will participate in workshops that address production issues related to organic livestock, crops and vegetables. The marketing workshops will focus on grocery, food service, commodities and specialty markets and may be of interest to non-organic businesses and organizations since the workshop leaders are from organizations such as Overwaite, the Westin Hotel, and other commodity buyers. The conference will also feature a trade show. For further information about the conference or trade show and for registration, call 1-800-387-6030, toll free in western Canada, or call direct (403) 578-3970.

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Agri-News

January 21, 2002

## Recognizing Fusarium head blight

Most cereal crop growers know something about Fusarium head blight. It is the disease that has been devastating to cereal crops in Manitoba and parts of Saskatchewan. What's not so clear is the impact of Fusarium on Alberta.

"The first thing to recognize is that there is more than one type of Fusarium," says Ron Hockridge, crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "F. *avenacium* and F. *culmorem* have affected Alberta's crops for years. They can affect seedling survival and reduce yields to some extent. However, they do not produce the toxin (DON) that is associated with tombstone disease. It is this toxin that is the biggest concern when dealing with F. *graminareum*, the variety that does produce DON, because at relatively low levels in feed grain it affects the performance of pigs and, in malting grain, causes foaminess in malt products."

Alberta has a team to co-ordinate efforts to detect the disease and prevent it from becoming a problem in Alberta and to respond to the potential threat from this disease. The team has put together information materials that will be useful for people who want to understand the disease - how important it is, some ideas on preventing it and how it spreads. These materials can be accessed through Alberta Agriculture's web site or in a factsheet available at district offices and through the Publications office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton.

"Detection programs are twofold," says Hockridge. "Each summer, several people inspect wheat fields to look for infected heads. Of the four fields inspected in Wetaskiwin County this year, none were determined to have the *graminareum* form of Fusarium. In fact, only one head in 1200 had any form of Fusarium. The Canadian Grain Commission also samples grains delivered to elevators. In Alberta, 457 samples were tested to the end of November 2001. Only four from southern Alberta tested positive for Fusarium."

One preventative measure introduced by the action team was a reduction in grain testing fees. Farmers having their seed or feed tested at a recognized lab can get half the testing fee covered.

Alberta has an advantage because of its status of being virtually Fusarium free. Barley from Alberta has a better chance of being selected for malt and hog feed. Alberta's greatest threat is from diseased grain coming in for seed or for feeding cattle.

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## This Week

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**Internet site: www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agrinews Editor e-mail: agrinews@agric.gov.ab.ca**

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Producers importing grain from a known infected area, would be wise to have the grain tested. The cost of a test is relatively low. Seed treatment will also help. Fusarium is not viable after passing through ruminant animals, but spilled grain can be a source of infection. Planting cereals into corn stubble is another practice that increases risk.

"So far, Alberta has enjoyed an advantage from the misfortune of others in dealing with Fusarium," says Hockridge. "To maintain this advantage, everyone has to do their best to keep this disease out."

Specialists from Alberta Agriculture are hosting five workshops throughout the province to help producers recognize and understand FHB. Producers are welcome to attend one of these workshops:

| | |
|---|---|
| Taber | February 11 |
| Carbon | February 12 |
| Camrose | February 13 |
| Westlock | February 14 |
| Fairview | February 15 |

*Contact:* *Ron Hockridge* *(780) 361-1240*
*Trevor Schoff* *(780) 679-1210*

## Alberta Forage Council grazing plan program

Grazing management plans are a priority for many farm managers. Recognizing the challenges of customizing and implementing individual grazing plans, the Alberta Forage Council (AFC) launched a pilot program that provided some consulting and mentoring for individual farmers and ranchers. The AFC grazing plan program was designed to help individual farmers develop a new grazing system or improve existing grazing practices. The pilot program, partially sponsored by the Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture (AESA) program, was completed in the winter of 2001, with the full program expected to be launched in early spring 2002.

"The goal of this grazing consultation program to is to help participants get to the third level of grazing knowledge and training," explains Mark MacNaughton, AFC chair. "Program participants are expected to have already attended a grazing workshop or pasture school, and have a good basic knowledge of grazing. They should have good records of their past year, and be willing to learn. This mentoring program will provide the next step through an on-going process where participants will get review and feedback of their plans, including some on-farm visitation."

Program participants will be partnered with a grazing mentor who will either be from the same local area or from a similar geographic location. This mentor will be someone with broad experience who has been practicing grazing management for years. "We're currently working with the various forage applied research associations and other forage and livestock specialists on the mentorship component of the program," adds MacNaughton.

Mentors will be able to assist participants with designing a grazing system, demonstrating monitoring techniques and providing practical advice. "They are there to help answer tough questions and provide insight and practical solutions to questions and problems on an on-going basis," says MacNaughton. Participants are responsible for developing and implementing a plan that works on their operation, relying on mentors to provide review and feedback along the way.

Part of the mentor's role is to visit the farm at the beginning of the grazing year when the grazing plan is started. A second follow-up farm visit would occur near the middle to the end of the grazing season to see what worked and what didn't, and help modify and fine-tune the principles and practices being implemented. The goal is to sit down and review the plan with the participant, identifying both the good parts and problem areas, and making any necessary changes to the plan for next year. These on-farm visits, combined with on-going review and feedback by the mentor, help farmers customize grazing principles and practices to meet their individual operational goals and objectives.

"This grazing plan program is being designed along the lines of other farm consultation programs matching farmers and experts," continues MacNaughton. "Although there will be some cost to farmers, it will be only a small portion of the total costs. The remainder is funded through the AFC grazing plan program."

Albertans interested in becoming involved in the program, either as a participant or a mentor, should contact the Richard de Bruijn with the Alberta Forage Council, Lacombe, (403) 782-0772 or toll free in Alberta at 1-877-527-0772.

*Contact:* *Alberta Forage Council*
*(403) 782-0772*
*1-877-527-0772*

## Getting the most from your Farmers' Market

A farmers' market is a community that unites both farmers and consumers. It's a commerce community built on much more than the exchange of goods for money. Farmers' markets provide a commercial, educational and social experience for their customers. Customers learn about their food source, expand their awareness of agricultural issues and build support for the farming community.

*Cont'd on page 3*

### Build on Consumer Priorities

Consumers' changing sentiments are supporting the growth of farmers' markets across North America. According to a 2001 study by Noble and Associates, consumers' priorities include:

- Family (family friendly, participatory)
- Community (local)
- Integrity (correlates honesty and sacrifice)
- Balance (particularly work/life balance, but also laughter, gaiety and hope)
- Authenticity (simpler, real)
- Security (want to deal with people you know and trust)

"For the January 2002 issue of the ***Alberta Agri-Preneur***, a quarterly newsletter, vendors and market managers from around the province were interviewed to gain insight into farmers' markets," says Kerry Engel, rural development specialist-business with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Westlock. "Farmers' markets are an ancient form of commerce that has seen a popular resurgence by supplying today's consumers with what they want. It's a family friendly, local, authentic and honest retail entertainment experience."

Selling at a farmers' market is not as simple as it looks: it's an art. Like any form of merchandising, it has its trade secrets. For Albertans who are looking at selling through a farmers' market or have been selling at one for years, there are a few hints that can make the experience more rewarding from the beginning.

### Simple strategies to improve farmers' market sales

- Stress the advantages of your product
- Avoid over packaging
- Build creative displays
- Offer point-of-sale or tag-on suggestions
- Give samples
- Use attention-getters, ie. demonstrations, music
- Create an atmosphere - people participate for the experience
- Don't lose the "people" touch like a friendly greeting and a thank-you
- Involve your children
- Project an image - use signage and identification
- Work co-operatively with other vendors
- Think "long-term, loyalty-building" with your customers

To learn more about how to succeed at selling food products at farmers' markets, get the latest issue of the ***Alberta Agri-Preneur***. The *Alberta Agri-Preneur* newsletter is a business development resource for agricultural entrepreneurs. Each issue focuses on different themes affecting today's agri-preneurs. The *Alberta Agri-Preneur* is available free of charge. To get your name on the mailing list, contact the Westlock district office of Alberta Agriculture at (780) 349-4465 (dial 310-0000 for toll free service) or e-mail: <kerry.engel@gov.ab.ca>.

*Contact:* *Kerry Engel*
*(780) 349-4465*

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## Farmers take due care!

Alberta farmers selling livestock feed are benefiting from today's higher prices, however, direct losses are also showing up because dealers and brokers have in some cases found they cannot afford the higher priced products. Dealers and brokers who months ago agreed to supply products at a price have found the purchase cost is above the arranged selling price. This has resulted in some producers only being partially paid before the firm either closes down or goes bankrupt.

"The problem that exists here is similar to *Buyer Beware* but is *Seller Beware*," cautions Dean Lien, Farmers' Advocate of Alberta. While most businesses in Alberta are reputable, there are a few that find themselves in financial trouble and try to pass their loss onto their suppliers and customers. Legislation to license all businesses is not a solution. It would create another cost and it would mean the licensing of anyone operating a business. We don't want to complicate the system by legislating neighboring farmer to farmer seed and feed transactions. This has been a practice in our agricultural community for years and has accounted for millions of dollars being transacted with no problems.

"During the last two years, I have seen too many firms close their door through bankruptcy leaving farmers who sold their product out in the cold," says Lien. "Every farmer selling grain, hay or straw should investigate thoroughly the financial state of the purchaser or broker."

In the case of grain sales, a call to the Canada Grain Commission (CGC), toll free at 1-800-853-6705, would certainly verify if the business is licensed and bonded. It should be noted, however, that large volumes of grain, hay and straw transactions occur outside the CGC's protection. As with any business transaction, due diligence is a must and any seller of any product should do a reference check with others.

*Cont'd on page 4*

"This issue becomes more serious every year as more and more farmers are dealing with firms over the telephone and Internet, covering greater distances," adds Lien. "Often the farmer never sees the buyer's facility or even meets the purchaser face to face. This, in itself, leaves room for disagreement over grade and quality. Personally knowing who you are dealing with helps eliminate worry and potential problems."

Alberta farmers, ranchers and buyers have established credibility over the years. Unfortunately, when things get tight, there will be a small percentage of operators who protect themselves at the expense of others.

*Contact:* *Dean Lien*
*Farmers' Advocate*
*(780) 427-2433*

## Opportunities for partnership in farm direct marketing

During the summer of 2001, Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development hosted four farm direct marketing tours throughout the province. The tours showcased best practices of farm direct marketing and agri-tourism businesses. In total, 16 operations were visited including market gardens and u-picks, country vacations, a petting zoo, farm stores and teahouses, alternative livestock products, branded beef products and corn mazes. Some of the businesses had been in operation for years, others were new to the market.

"The tours targeted farm managers currently involved in direct marketing who wanted to learn more, as well as farm managers who were interested in diversifying into a market-focused operation," says Eileen Kotowich, rural development specialist-business, Vermilion. "The tours were also an opportunity for the different businesses to benefit from the fresh ideas and reactions of other entrepreneurs viewing their businesses for the first time."

One of the opportunities mentioned after several of the tour stops was the advantage of partnering with other businesses. Many of these businesses are operating directly from their farms - often off the beaten path from major centers. They shared their challenge of getting customers to come to their farms. Several of the toured businesses recognized the importance of working with other direct marketing/agri-tourism operations in order to attract a larger customer base.

For example, Morris Meadows, seen on the Red Deer tour, has a large variety of brochures for other local tourist attractions. The Wirsig Farm and Ranch Vacations, visited on the Calgary tour, take their guests to local tourist destinations if prearranged.

"The Bloomin' Inn Guest Ranch at Pincher Creek was one of the stops on the Lethbridge tour," adds Kotowich. "Colleen and Francis Cyr are very excited about agri-tourism and about promoting their beautiful part of the world, in particular. They are working with other local businesses to put together a tour package called *Countryside Adventures*. Their initial goal is to develop weekend events, that will help to get their group started in the tourism business. Eventually hoping to be viewed as a tour stop destination."

This type of cooperation should not be viewed as a threat. Even if the company being suggested is in the same line of business, working together to develop a tour stop destination or just passing along the name of a business that may meet the needs of a customer, cooperation is a win-win situation. It is an opportunity for everyone to benefit and be the best they can be, something that is good for the consumer!

Albertans wanting to market their agricultural food products directly to the consumer may be interested in the upcoming ***Explore Direct Regional "How To" Workshops*** being held in February and March 2002. Alberta Agriculture is offering two-day sessions in Camrose on February 27 and March 6 and in Westlock on February 28 and March 8. For further information on the workshops, contact Kerry Engel at (780) 349-4465, Marian Williams at (780) 679-1210 or Eileen Kotowich at (780) 853-8223.

*Contact:* *Eileen Kotowich*
*(780) 853-8223*
*Marian Williams*
*(780) 679-1210*
*Kerry Engel*
*(780) 349-4465*

*Cont'd on page 5*

# Agri-News Briefs

## Correction to Agri-News article

The December 10 issue of *Agri-News* included an article entitled ***Standards for earthen manure storage facilities protect the environment***. The summary conclusions as detailed in the last paragraph were mis-stated. The research suggested that the guidelines for siting new earthen manure storages, as outlined in the 2000 Code of Practice, are valid and should be followed. The research does not make any inferences or suggestions with respect to investigating existing earthen manure storages.

## Water conferences

The ***Northwest Irrigation Operators*** are hosting their annual conference and tour in the Boise-Riverside area on February 19 to 20, 2002. For further information contact Verna Lees at the Alberta Irrigation Projects Association by phoning (403) 328-3063 in Lethbridge, faxing (403) 327-1043 or e-mailing <aipa@telusplanet.net>.

The ***Oldman River Basin Water Quality Initiative*** is hosting its annual workshop on February 12, 2002 at the Lethbridge Lodge Hotel. At the workshop, an update on the ongoing study of the river and its tributaries will be provided. For further information, contact Casey at (403) 382-4239.

## Fish farming

***Raising Fish in Your Pond or Dugout*** is a course for anyone interested in raising fish for recreational purposes. It provides an overview of requirements when raising fish, including selecting and constructing a fishpond, licensing, purchasing fish and supplies, feeding, water quality, aeration and disease, predator and weed control. As well as classroom instruction, participants will have an opportunity to view various fish culture and aeration equipment, and speak with industry representatives, such as fingerling suppliers, licencing inspectors and staff from Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's aquaculture section. The course is being held in six locations throughout the province during February 2002 and all sessions begin at 6:30 p.m.:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| February 5, 2002 | Stony Plain | (780) 963-6101 |
| February 6, 2002 | Westlock | (780) 349-4465 |
| February 12, 2002 | Tofield | (780) 679-1210 |
| February 13, 2002 | Wetaskiwin | (780) 361-1240 |
| February 26, 2002 | Airdrie | (403) 948-8503 |
| February 27, 2002 | Lacombe | (403) 782-3301 |

Cost of the course is $25 per person (includes GST and a course manual). Seating is limited. Any courses having less than 10 paid pre-registrants will be cancelled. For further information, contact Eric Hutchings, Alberta Agriculture, (403) 381-5574, Lethbridge.

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# Agri-News

January 28, 2002

## AMI brings individual production comparisons to Alberta farmers

Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC) Crop Insurance policyholders should watch their mail for the newly updated Alberta Management Insights (AMI) information.

"The AMI package provides detailed information on how an individual farmer's yields and farming practices compare to those of local farmers, as well as farmers in the same soil zone and crop insurance risk area," says Bill Campbell, AMI coordinator, AFSC, Lacombe. "It's based on about 10 million acres of data from Alberta's crop insurance program, making it one of the largest research efforts in the province. This is the third year this kind of information has been made available to Alberta farmers."

To get this information, you must be an AFSC Crop Insurance policyholder. Policyholders will receive four components in their mailing:

- **Soil zone and risk area map**: with an indication of where your farm is located;
- **Individual land use summary**: up to five years (1997-2001) of personal information about land holdings, insured crops and reported or measured yields;
- **Individual yield variety comparison**: up to five years of yield data for the varieties you have insured, and a comparison to average yields from those varieties in the same soil zone and risk area; and
- **Summary of tillage and seeding dates**: the percentage of farms in a risk area practicing different tillage techniques and the dates they finished seeding.

"General AMI information that has not been individualized by farm is available for farmers who do not have a policy with AFSC," says Campbell. "This will be available through Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and AFSC offices in the province early in 2002."

For more information on AMI, contact AFSC at 1-800-396-0215.

*Contact:* *Bill Campbell*
*(403) 782-8299*
*E-mail: <bill.campbell@gov.ab.ca>*

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## Choosing varieties for this year's crops

A job that has often been relegated to early winter is the selection of crop varieties to grow this year. Most farmers want some of the newer varieties to see how they will perform on their farm. Therefore, there is some research to do each year.

"One popular source of information is the factsheet ***Varieties of cereals and oilseeds for Alberta***," says Ron Hockridge, crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "The information in this publication comes from regional variety trials and co-op data. It is now available from district offices of Alberta Agriculture or on the web at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca>."

To use the information effectively, you should have some criteria set for making your selection. Yield is often the first thing people search out, however, there is a margin of error in any test. Numbers that are generally accepted suggest that cereal varieties that show a yield within five per cent of each other are virtually the same, and likewise there is no significant difference between canola varieties within eight per cent. Other factors may be more important.

"Lodging resistance is an important feature for many local farmers," adds Hockridge. "If using high fertility rates, you will probably want a semi-dwarf or something that is rated excellent for lodging. Disease resistance is also an important factor, but you have to use some judgment when applying the data to local conditions. Normally, scald is the most important barley leaf disease to consider in central Alberta. Last year net blotch was of greater concern because of the drier conditions. It is impossible to predict summer weather at this time of year so producers will have to decide whether to go with the long-term averages or make some guesses based on present weather trends."

Variety selection also affects management decisions. A cereal that is susceptible to root diseases should certainly receive a seed treatment. Time to maturity is a softer measure, but the numbers do show trends. That may be important when trying to base harvesting schedules on seeding dates.

"The Alberta Agriculture factsheet shouldn't be the only source of information used," says Hockridge. "Not all varieties are entered into the regional tests. Company data and co-op data are also important. Alberta Management Insights (AMI) is a program run with Alberta crop insurance that will show how well varieties have done in different areas in the past. Local variety trials are also sources of information, where they exist."

Variety selection may not be the most important decision on the farm, but it does have an influence on other decisions. Taking the time to find out the strengths and weaknesses of different varieties can ultimately have a significant influence on the bottom line.

Copies of ***Varieties of cereals and oilseeds for Alberta*** (Agdex 100/32) are available at all district offices of Alberta Agriculture or the Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, phone 1-800-292-5697, fax (780) 422-8835 or on-line at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca>.

*Contact:* *Ron Hockridge*
*(780) 361-1240*

## Western Canadian Dairy Seminar

The Western Canadian Dairy Seminar (WCDS) is celebrating its 20th Anniversary during the annual WCDS seminar. The seminar is being held at the Capri Centre, Red Deer, on March 5 to 8, 2002. The pre-conference tour to three local dairy farms and a workshop for nutritionists is being held on March 5.

The seminar is designed for participants who want to improve their knowledge and decision-making abilities in dairy production and technology. Commercial dairy producers, researchers, agribusiness, service and supply representatives, extension and education specialists, and anyone interested in the latest information in dairy production and technology are invited to attend.

"For the 2002 WCDS, the organizing committee pulled out all the stops and has packed the agenda with excellent speakers and presenters," says Joanne Morrison, conference coordinator. "The seminar has been organized into nine sessions dealing with timely and important issues facing dairy producers. We have three keynote speakers scheduled: the Hon. Shirley McClellan, Alberta's Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development; David Fraser, University of British Columbia, speaking on animal welfare and consumers' changing values; and, Mike Hutjens, University of Illinois, discussing a blueprint for evaluating feeding programs."

The seminar sessions include:

1. **Benchmarks for a Successful Dairy Operation** - cow management; nutritional disorders; farm records
2. **Health** - production limiting diseases; Johne's Disease herd status program; preventing hoof problems; genetic selection
3. **Dairy Policy** - dairy performance; milk deregulation; environmental issues; the next round of trade talks
4. **Reproduction** - dairy reproductive management; postpartum reproductive issues; how stress effects fertility; essential nutritional fatty acids
5. **Forages** - forage quality; the right corn for silage; management affects health and lactation performance

*Cont'd on page 3*

6. **Integrated Nutrient Management** - environmental issues; nutrient cycling and profitability
7. **Milking Management and Calf Feeding** - increasing milking frequency; colostrum feeding, management and supplementation
8. **Ask the Speakers Session and Ice Cream Social** - a new format that gives attendees the chance to visit with speakers
9. **Management and Facilities** - developing a dairy business; modernization; how facilities effect performance

"The seminar also includes three workshops, in addition to the pre-conference workshop," adds Morrison. The three topics of the workshops are: Hiring, Motivating and Keeping Quality Employees; Effects of Nutrition on Hoof Health and Lameness; and, Changing Public Values - Addressing Societal Concerns. It promises to be a busy few days where dairy producers can listen, learn and share."

Registration fees for the conference are $195 per person if received before February 4, 2002. Fees are $235 if payment is received after February 4, 2002. Individual day registration is also available. Students should ask about special student rates. The pre-conference tour and all workshops can be attended for individual registration fees. For further information on registration and registration fees, check out the WCDS web site at <http://www.afns.ualberta.ca/hosted/wcds/> or contact Morrison at (780) 492-3236 or e-mail <wcds@afhe.ualberta.ca>.

*Contact: Joanne Morrison*
*Conference Coordinator*
*Western Canadian Dairy Seminar*
*(780) 492-3236/Fax: (780) 492-9130*
*E-mail: wcds@afhe.ualberta.ca*
*Web site: <www.afns.ualberta.ca/wcds>*

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## Researching for diversification success

Research, research, research - it's one of the frequently heard exclamations from participants on the ***Explore Direct*** tours this summer. Sixteen different operations were visited on four tours in 2001, giving participants a chance to experience farm direct marketing and agri-tourism operations. Part of the information shared by the different tour stops was how important market research was to their success.

"The most memorable comments came from Karen Cole, owner of the Rosebush Craft and Teahouse," says Eileen Kotowich, rural development specialist-business with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Vermilion. "She told us how her dream had been to open a bed and breakfast. She attended a market research course held by Alberta Agriculture where she got the tools necessary to explore her dream. She did a literature review, she surveyed potential customers, she talked to other owners of bed and breakfasts and then she opened a craft and teahouse instead. Her market research told her a bed and breakfast may not be successful in her area, and that the time commitment was more than she and her husband were willing to give."

Most people have heard the statistic - 80 per cent of small businesses fail within the first year. This is a very frightening proposition when most people pour their hearts and souls into their businesses. One way to help ensure a venture has every chance of being successful is to perform market research. Market research is "*...an orderly, objective way of learning about people - the people who buy from you or might buy from you.*" [***Market Research - The Basics***, Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development].

"If you want to learn more about the fundamentals of farm direct marketing and market research, you should consider attending one of our "***How To***" workshops being held in February and March 2002," adds Kotowich. "These workshops are targeted towards producers and processors in the start-up phase of their operations. At these workshops, you will learn about farm direct marketing and the trends that are impacting this ever-expanding industry. You will be given the tools and strategies necessary to perform your own market research to help you get your operation off the ground. You will have a chance to have interactive discussions with a variety of guest speakers who will share their insights into farm direct marketing with you.

Two, 2-day, ***Explore Direct - "How To" Workshops*** will be held this winter. One in **Camrose**: February 27 and March 6 and the other in **Westlock**: February 28 and March 7. Brochures are available by calling the Westlock Alberta Agriculture office at (780) 349-4465.In addition, if you are interested in borrowing some excellent reference material on market research, farm direct marketing or agri-tourism, contact one of Alberta Agriculture's rural development specialists - business:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Kerry Engel | Westlock | (780) 349-4465 |
| Lori-Jo Graham | Olds | (403) 556-4244 |
| Lisa Houle | Red Deer | (403) 340-5369 |
| Lynn Stegman | Red Deer | (403) 340-7010 |
| Sharon Stollery | Stony Plain | (780) 963-6101 |
| Slav Heller | St. Paul | (780) 645-6301 |
| Kathy Lowther & Donna Fleury | Airdrie | (403) 948-8537 |
| Janice McGregor | Edmonton | (780) 415-2317 |
| Leona Reynolds-Zayak | Vermilion | (780) 853-8101 |
| Eileen Kotowich | Vermilion | (780) 853-8223 |
| Linda Hawk | Medicine Hat | (403) 529-3616 |
| Jan Warren | Vulcan | (780) 485-5116 |
| Marian Williams | Camrose | (780) 679-1210 |

*Contact: Eileen Kotowich*
*(780) 853-8223*

*Kerry Engel*
*(780) 349-4465*

*Cont'd on page 4*

# AESA programming encourages conservation partnerships

To address changing needs, the Farm-Based Component of the Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture Program (AESA) is encouraging longer term partnerships for programming. Through these partnerships, groups are required to develop a three-year program addressing specific needs in an area, rather than shorter one-year projects.

"AESA is looking at partnerships as a way to promote practice change in a more effective way," explains Janet Dietrich, northern region conservation coordinator in Vegreville. "Partnering with other municipalities or local groups with similar goals, is a way to work together to reduce duplication, be exposed to a larger audience and to be more effective with the dollars spent on the program. By going to a three-year program plan with clearly defined goals and objectives, groups will be able to focus on priority management issues specific to their area. Evaluation is a key component of the three-year plan, and will be used to measure results and determine if goals and objectives were reached."

To assist with this new direction, Dietrich has formed a northern region conservation team in conjunction with the two area AESA Technicians, Kathy Reid and Tara Golby, and Cindy Bishop, rural development specialist-organizations with AAFRD. This team will provide support and assistance to municipalities and organizations to establish partnerships, facilitate discussions and develop their three-year plans.

Working in a collaborative and coordinated long-term partnership is not business as usual. For real success, partners need to fully commit to building and maintaining their partnership. "One critical component of partnerships is decision-making and the processes that will be used to make decisions," explains Bishop. "Groups need to think about what is at stake, who needs to have a say, who will have the authority, and to decide 'how to decide' before they hit the decision. This process should lead to decisions that all of the partners are comfortable with. For most groups, there is always some reluctance to put in the required time upfront attending to some of the process details related to structure and operation of a partnership. We know that taking the time to do this initial work pays off ten-fold."

Leadership is another key factor of partnerships. "The person who gets the partnership rolling doesn't have to be the leader of the long-term partnership," says Bishop. The leadership role can be shared among the partners, or the partners can select an individual among their ranks to be the leader. A good leader places a premium on communication and is an effective communicator. This person has a big picture focus, and is able to motivate people.

"One of the services specialists can offer to a partnership and its leaders, is facilitation of planning sessions to help guide the group through the process of problem solving and decision-making," adds Bishop. "Working with a facilitator allows the whole group to be more involved with planning and attending to business, rather than focusing on running a meeting. We can also help leaders sort out roles and responsibilities for themselves and their partners."

An example of an AESA partnership is one that was started as a pilot last year between Smoky Lake County and the County of St. Paul. So far, the partnership is working successfully and the partners are looking forward to the next three-year program. "With full-time manpower devoted to the AESA Program, we are able to be a lot more focused and to have more direct input into the program," says Jeff Warawa, agriculture fieldman for Smoky Lake County. "Some of the key program components for the partnership are riparian health and pasture management."

Warawa believes the success of this partnership began with the planning process that occurred between the two fieldmen and the full-time employee they hired to manage the program. "It's important to develop provisions to include this employee in regular communication about on-going projects and new issues that arise," says Warawa. "However, once they get started on the program, the key is not to micro-manage. Both councils continue to be very supportive of this partnership approach to AESA programming in their areas."

"AESA needs to be accountable for the dollars it is committing to the various programs it supports," explains Dietrich. "Therefore, these program partnerships are being asked to develop needs assessments at the beginning of their three-year plans, develop goals and objectives and then complete evaluations at the end of their plans. This information will help evaluate the accomplishments of the three-year program, the dollars spent reaching those accomplishments, and assist with future planning."

Planning and partnership support information is available on the AESA website in the Extension Aids section.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Contact:* | *Cindy Bishop*<br>*(780) 986-8985* | *Janet Dietrich*<br>*(780) 632-5466* |

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# Agri-News Briefs

## Marketing medicinal herbs

Richard Alan Miller, internationally recognized new crop agricultural marketing consultant, will be making presentations at two locations in Alberta. On February 6, 2002, Miller will be a key resource at a one-day workshop at the Centre for Agri-Industrial Technology, 6312 - 50 Street, Edmonton. The session will touch on market options, identifying and contracting with industry buyers, pricing strategies, market requirements and market specific harvest requirements. The program is also an opportunity for Albertans to learn about herb drying and harvest options; understand marketing plans for new crops; discover the ethics in marketing options; identify niche market opportunities and assess their challenges; and, access industry resources. Cost of this one-day event is $40 per person and the registration deadline is February 1, 2002. The workshop is limited to 30 participants. For further information on the Edmonton session, contact Kirsty Piquette, (780) 645-6301 or e-mail <kirsty.piquette@gov.ab.ca>.

Miller is also leading the ***On Track With Medicinals: Advanced Marketing workshop***, part of the ***New Crop Options for the Peace*** series. The workshop is being held on February 7, 2002 at the Fairview College. This advanced marketing workshop will look at marketing opportunities for herbs and medicinals, and market development and access strategies. Registration is $30 per person and registration deadline is February 1, 2002. For further information or to register for the Fairview workshop, contact Cindy or Pat in the Grande Prairie Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development office at (780) 538-5285.

## Watershed conference

Albertans who care about their water are invited to attend the Local Watersheds in Action conference at the Strathmore Civic Centre on February 7, 2002. The conference is sponsored by the Red-Bow Regional Watershed Alliance, Ducks Unlimited and Madawaska Consulting. Speakers include: Shane Gabor, a presenter at the "Walkerton Inquiry" for Ducks Unlimited, will discuss North American community watershed initiatives; Merle Olson, DVM, a microorganism specialist from the University of Calgary, will talk about what's in our water; and, a representative from the Cows and Fish Program will discuss the economic benefits to crop and livestock operations from well managed riparian areas. Registration cost is $10 per person. For further information or to register, contact George Stalker at (403) 948-8516.

## Grasshopper identification update

A technical update on grasshoppers for Agricultural Service Board fieldmen, assistants and inspectors is planned for March 6, 2002. The update will be held at the Ag Canada Station in Lethbridge from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. During the year 2002, it is possible that producers will see a large grasshopper population in many areas of the province that don't usually see large numbers of this pest. Ag fieldmen will be better able to help their producers and research efforts by understanding the grasshopper situation. The update agenda includes presentations on grasshopper identification; control options; other insect concerns; and a discussion of the *Agricultural Pest Act*. Registration is $20 and includes a hand-lens, sample boxes, grasshopper keys and proceedings. Registration will be accepted until February 8, 2002. Space is limited, and items need to be purchases and prepared for the update, so early registration is appreciated. To register, contact the Alberta Agriculture Call Centre at 1-866-882-7677 and ask to register for the Grasshopper Technical Update.

## New toll free line for LIS

Producers can now call Alberta's Livestock Identification Service (LIS) toll free. On January 4, 2002 the new toll free number, 1-866-509-2088 became operational. Producers calling this number will have access to all the services currently provided by the LIS head office. Producers can still call their local brand inspector with questions or to report stolen or lost cattle. The toll free number is an effective way of reducing costs to producers and is the latest effort by LIS to improve the services offered to livestock producers. For further information, contact Ken Weir, general manager LIS, (403) 509-2088.

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# Agri-News

February 4, 2002

## Understanding Fusarium head blight

Fusarium head blight is a cereal disease that could pose a major threat to the Alberta grain industry. It has already affected crop production in Manitoba, eastern Saskatchewan and parts of the United States. It has been gradually heading west.

"To some people, the Fusarium issue is confusing," says Ron Hockridge, crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "We have some species of the disease in Alberta and it hasn't been devastating. The type of Fusarium Alberta's has experienced causes seedling disease and may reduce yields by infecting heads, but seed treatments and crop rotations have kept losses to a tolerable level. *Fusarium graminearum*, the organism coming from Manitoba, is a different matter though. Damage to seeds can cause major yield losses under the right weather conditions. As well, this species produces a toxin in the seed that reduces the performance of livestock it is fed to, and causes such things as frothiness in beer. It is most severe in wheat, barley and corn, but it also affects many other crops."

The most effective way to avoid losses from Fusarium in Alberta is to keep it from getting a foothold here. To do this, farmers need information. The Fusarium response team, Alberta Agriculture and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada are teaming up to organize seminars across the province. The series is being held in:

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|---|---|
| Taber | February 11 |
| Carbon | February 12 |
| Camrose | February 13 |
| Westlock | February 14 |
| Fairview | February 15 |

The goal of the meetings is to help farmers and people in the industry understand the disease. Randy Clear from the Canadian Grain Commission is the feature speaker. He has been involved in programs to handle the disease and to monitor its progress across the prairies. A farmer from Manitoba will explain what Fusarium has meant to him and how he is coping with the problem. Curtis Weeks, an Alberta

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Agriculture cereals and oilseeds specialist who has first hand experience with the Manitoba situation, will discuss what he learned from farmers and scientists in Manitoba. A plant pathologist will explain the disease cycle, what research is being carried out and how we might manage to avoid it. A malt selector will explain how their industry deals with it.

"Right now, Alberta is in a position to benefit from the east having this problem," says Hockridge. "We are getting more barley selected for malt, our barley is more suitable for hog rations and our wheat does not have to find special markets. To continue this advantage we need to do everything possible to avoid the disease. The first step for agri-businesses and farmers is to contact their local district agriculture office and register for a seminar so they understand *Fusarium graminearum*."

*Contact:* *Ron Hockridge*
*(780) 361-1240*

## Summer Employment Program for Alberta's processing industry continues

The *Agricultural Processing Industry Employment Program* (APIEP) provides opportunities for career-related experience and skill training for at least 30 students employed in Alberta's processing industry from May 1 to August 31. Processors who hire a student for the summer are reimbursed for one-third of the employee's salary, up to $500 per month, to a maximum of $2,000 for the summer.

"The APIEP is funded by Alberta Human Resources and Employment (AHRE) and administered by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development," says Zahra Kanji, grant administration coordinator with Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton. "The program began in the summer of 1996. Pending confirmation of funding from AHRE at the beginning of March, the program will be running again in the summer of 2002."

Employers must be the owner of a value-added processing business, located in Alberta. Students must be attending a post-secondary institution, enrolled in a degree, diploma or certificate program, must be returning to school in the fall, and may not be a relative of the employer. Employment must provide career-related experience for the student and must be full-time for at least four continuous weeks within the program period.

"The program is valuable for both the processor and the student," adds Kanji. "The program enables companies to hire qualified summer help at reduced cost and lets students gain valuable experience that may help them in attaining future employment."

Over 200 processors in the province were sent an application package on January 18, 2002. Processors who did not receive a package and want to be added to the mailing list should contact Kanji at (780) 427-4351. Employers have until the end of April to recruit a student and submit their completed application.

Further details regarding program guidelines and application are available on Alberta Agriculture's web site at: <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/ministry/programs/ag_processing.html>.

*Contact:* *Zahra Kanji*
*(780) 427-4351*

## Prairie berries by the acre

The saskatoon berry - a native Canadian fruit that could be only found in the wild a quarter century ago, is now a native prairie fruit that can be found growing on hundreds of cultivated acres in Alberta.

"The saskatoon is an Alberta fruit crop success story," says Lloyd Hausher, provincial fruit crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South (CDCS), Brooks. "Commercial saskatoon plantings can be found established in all zones of the province. The majority of this acreage is harvested with numerous bush fruit harvesters developed for this type of plant. The fruit is then cleaned and frozen, ending up in muffins, ice cream, pie, jams, jellies and numerous other sweets."

Dealing with this relatively new Alberta diversified crop, the industry continues to upgrade its knowledge on a regular basis. The Fruit Growers Society of Alberta (FGSA), representing bush fruit producers across the province, has developed an annual Growers Marketing and Production Workshop. This workshop, designed for producers with long and continuing interest in the bush fruit industry, brings together a wide variety of speakers covering a full range of topics. It also provides an excellent networking opportunity for new and established producers alike.

The workshop is scheduled for February 26 and 27, 2002 at the Days Inn, Nisku. "Production presentations will primarily relate to commercial saskatoon, black currant and rhubarb production," adds Hausher. "Processing and marketing presentations are the focus, and will cover a wide range of topics including: health and safety standards; marketing; new generation cooperatives; integrated harvesting; processing; brokerage firm marketing; functional goods; and marketing to processors and wineries.

Full registration is $175 for FGSA members, $200 non-members. Registration includes seminars, continental breakfast, lunch and banquet. Daily registration is available. More information can be obtained from Joyce Megson at (403) 748-2289.

*Contact:* *Lloyd Hausher*
*(403) 362-1309*

*Cont'd on page 3*

## 750 equine enthusiasts congregate in Red Deer

Over 750 horse enthusiasts met in Red Deer on January 11 to 13, 2002 to attend the 22nd annual Horse Breeders and Owners Conference.

Internationally respected speakers covered a range of topics dealing with nutrition, equine research, exercise and training, conformation, reproduction, the equine market and the growing horse industry.

"The conference is an opportunity for Albertans involved in the horse industry to hear the newest information available, socialize and network with others in the Alberta equine community," says Les Burwash, manager of equine programs with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and a member of the conference organizing committee. "The conference is a great place to learn. It's important for Albertans to keep up with new research and the direction this industry is headed."

Alberta's reputation for producing excellent performance horses is growing and the goals set by equine associations and individual breeders indicate that the industry is certainly on the right track in the province. Education and research are part of reaching that goal. The conference, coordinated by the horse industry section of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, receives critical acclaim each year from attendees as well as invited speakers and presenters.

Along with Burwash, conference organizers Lori Warren of Alberta Agriculture's horse industry section, with the guidance of Doug Milligan, head of the pork, poultry & horse branch, Alberta Agriculture, and representatives from provincial breed associations make sure the sessions cover current issues and topics of concern and interest to Alberta horse breeders and owners. The invited speakers are always experts in their chosen fields, recognized internationally by the horse industry.

The annual conference is supported by a number of sponsors: Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture, Alberta Equestrian Federation, Alberta Equine On-Line, Alberta S.P.C.A., Alberta Veterinary Medical Association, Appaloosa Horse Club of Canada, AVERA Systems Inc., Ayerst Veterinary Laboratories, Cargill Animal Nutrition, Country Junction Feeds, Eagle Valley ABM, Electro-Braid Fence, Endurance Riders of Alberta, Equi-Master Inc., Equine Hippe Canada, Equine Trader, Feed Rite, HiQual Livestock Equipment, Horse Publications Group, Horse-Sense Herbs Ltd., Horses All, Intervet Canada Ltd., The Jones Boys Saddlery & Western Wear, Masterfeeds, Merial Canada, Minitube Canada, Northernhorse.com, Northern Horse Review, Olds College - Equine Sciences, Pacific/Prairie Horse, Susanne Loutas, Trail Riding Alberta Conference, United Farmers of Alberta (UFA), Vetoquinol N.A. Inc., Wild Rose Equine Ranching Association (N.A.E.R.I.C. member), Pegasus Bio-Feed Corp., and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

"Our sponsors are instrumental in making the conference such a success," says Burwash. "As in years past, a donation from the conference proceeds will be made to equine research. In this way, something is given back that is of value to all horse owners and breeders.

"The conference organizers would like to extend a special thank you to Sandy Clarke, Alberta Agriculture; Shirley Sommert Ogden, Alberta Agriculture; Dawn McKay, Alberta Infrastructure; Maxine Hutt, Alberta Agriculture; and, Sharon Tomlinson, Canadian Thoroughbred Horse Society, for supporting the event by coordinating and managing registrations."

The Horse Owners and Breeders Conference is held each year in January. It has become known as one the premier horse conference in North America. Several speakers are already confirmed for next year's conference scheduled for January 10 to 12, 2003.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Contact:* | *Les Burwash*<br>*(403) 948-8532* | *Doug Milligan*<br>*(780) 427-4589* |

## Hans Hansma receives Distinguished Service Award

The third Distinguished Service Award was presented by the Alberta Horse Industry at the 2002 Horse Breeders and Owners Conference, held in Red Deer on January 11 to 13, 2002. The award recognizes individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the development of the horse industry in the province. The award is highly prestigious as it honors great people in Alberta's growing equine industry.

This year, the Distinguished Service Award was presented posthumously to Hans Hansma, an inspirational leader who contributed a great deal to the development of the quarter horse industry in Alberta. The award was accepted by his wife, Henny.

Hans and Henny came to Canada from Holland and started a grain farm near Granum. His real interest in horses was ignited when his five boys, Taco, Winston, Gerry, Paul and David started showing interest in riding and showing.

"With his sons, Hansma became one of the most prominent breeders of quality quarter horses in Canada," says Doug Milligan, head of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's pork, poultry & horse branch, member of the conference organizing committee and Distinguished Service Award presenter. "He bred horses for the marketplace, horses that people wanted to ride and own. It takes a great deal of insight and skill to consistently breed horses that are readily marketable for sport and recreation, and be successful and profitable at it."

*Cont'd on page 4*

Hansma was a generous man who was committed to moving the horse industry and everyone associated with it forward. He was the driving force behind the formation of the Alberta Quarter Horse Breeding Group. During his time, the Group was highly successful in the development of quality sales for members, promotional projects and the establishment of export sales.

All of the Hansma sons still have strong associations with the horse industry both in training and breeding. The success of this family in the horse industry is a clear indication of the dedication and leadership Hansma provided to his family and to the horse industry in Alberta. Hans Hansma died in 1996.

*A photo of Henny Hansma, Taco, Winston and David Hansma accepting the award is posted on the Agri-News page of Alberta Agriculture's web site* <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/ministry/agrinews/index.html>.

| *Contact:* | *Doug Milligan* | *Les Burwash* |
|---|---|---|
| | *(780) 427-4589* | *(403) 948-8532* |

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# Agri-News Briefs

## The 2002 Emerald Awards

The Emerald Foundation is once again seeking those Alberta individuals, organizations and community groups that have demonstrated excellence in activities to protect, preserve, enhance and sustain our environment. Nomination forms for the 2002 Emerald Awards are now available from the Alberta Emerald Foundation for Environmental Excellence. Nominations can be made in a variety of categories including small or large business, corporate or institutional leadership, research and innovation, individual commitment, not-for-profit association or community group, education and government institution. A new award is being introduced for 2002 - the *Board of Governors Emerald Award for Climate Change* will acknowledge the need to raise awareness about the issue of climate change and profile associated positive initiatives. Full details about this award are available on the Emerald Awards web site <http://www.emeraldawards.com> or from the Emerald Awards office.

In order to be considered for an Emerald Award, the individual or initiative must meet the criteria that includes demonstration of:

- commitment to preservation, protection, enhancement or sustainability of the environment
- positive, tangible and long-term impact on quality of air, water or land
- preservation of biological diversity
- public or corporate attitudes toward the environment

Nominations close on February 28, 2002. For further information, please contact Becky Vander Steen, executive director Emerald Awards, (780) 413-9629, toll free 1-800-219-8329, fax (780) 459-6009 or e-mail <bvandersteen@trevose.com>.

## Crop variety factsheets

The factsheets ***Varieties of Perennial Hay and Pasture Crops for Alberta*** (Agdex 120/32) and ***Varieties of Cereal and Oilseed Crops for Alberta - 2002*** (Agdex 100/32) are now available. The information in these factsheets, produced by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, is based on province wide testing. For the hay and pasture crops data, yield comparison data taken from three harvest years from at least two locations within each soil zone is required before data is used. The cereal and oilseed crops factsheet provides information on individual varieties and indicates cereal and oilseed production areas within the province. Farmers can use the information to choose varieties that may be best suited to their own particular farming programs. The information in both factsheets is set out in easy-to-read tables. Information included in the factsheets should be used only as an indicator of potential yield differences between varieties. Alberta Agriculture Agri-Facts factsheets are free and are available at all Alberta Agriculture offices, from the Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6 or on-line at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca>.

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# Agri-News

February 11, 2002

## Grasshopper threat continues for 2002

Numbers from the fall grasshopper survey are in and the grasshopper risk assessment map is in progress. The data shows that producers are looking at increased pressure from grasshoppers for the coming season. Grasshopper numbers are up, and this is consistent with what was expected for this year, as last year was a building year for the outbreak.

"Everyone should be aware of the grasshopper threat and some areas just have to be more aware than others," says Jim Calpas, provincial integrated pest management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "The general rule is if you had a grasshopper problem last year, you are looking at an increased problem this year."

### *Alberta's grasshopper situation*

The hopper problem is also increasing in distribution, with more areas coming under high grasshopper pressure. Areas west and southwest of Edmonton, Yellowhead County, Parkland County and Lac Ste. Anne will see a sharp rise in grasshopper pressure, as will County 12 (Athabasca) and to a lesser extent County 10 (Wetaskiwin). This is in addition to the continued broad band of grasshopper pressure running through from Barrhead, Westlock, Smoky River and Bonnyville down the eastern border with Saskatchewan into Cypress County, then turning west through the M.D. of Taber, County 5 (Warner) and County of Lethbridge.

Hanna, Oyen, Consort and Castor (Special Areas 2, 3, 4, and County 18) are the areas expected to be under the most severe grasshopper pressure. These were also the areas hardest hit last year.

The actual grasshopper counts coming from the counties, M.D.s and special areas are presented in the included table and represent the number of grasshoppers per square metre that were counted in the fields and roadsides. The data is collected by agricultural fieldmen from over 1,700 sites throughout the province. The numbers represent the average from all the collection sites in each area. The chart presents the numbers from the last four years so the trend in the individual areas can be tracked.

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**Note**: In general, county average densities (field) greater than 3.00 indicate significant numbers of grasshoppers in some areas.
Dr. Dan Johnson and Craig Andrews, Lethbridge Research Centre

| | *1998* ***ROAD*** | *1998* ***FIELD*** | *1999* ***ROAD*** | *1999* ***FIELD*** | *2000* ***ROAD*** | *2000* ***FIELD*** | *2001* ***ROAD*** | *2001* ***FIELD*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Acadia Valley | 9.00 | 2.00 | 9.00 | 2.00 | 10.00 | 3.56 | 20.10 | 5.38 |
| Athabasca | 0.00 | 0.00 | 12.70 | 6.71 | 2.00 | 0.00 | 22.50 | 11.80 |
| Barrhead | 0.00 | 0.00 | 2.00 | 2.92 | 0.32 | 0.26 | 5.54 | 7.63 |
| Beaver | 0.00 | 0.00 | 2.00 | 9.00 | 2.00 | 0.00 | 4.00 | 1.00 |
| Blood Reserve | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 2.00 | 0.0 | 9.00 | 2.00 |
| Bonnyville | 0.00 | 0.00 | 9.43 | 13.10 | 2.00 | 0.00 | 15.60 | 17.00 |
| Camrose | 9.00 | 2.00 | 6.73 | 1.55 | 4.91 | 1.18 | 9.36 | 2.09 |
| Cardston | 4.45 | 3.00 | 5.07 | 4.67 | 3.74 | 3.09 | 5.30 | 4.05 |
| Consort | 7.39 | 7.13 | 4.10 | 3.28 | 5.50 | 4.00 | 7.69 | 7.51 |
| Cypress | 1.91 | 1.09 | 4.00 | 1.00 | 4.00 | 1.00 | 20.00 | 7.00 |
| Fairview | | | 6.20 | 14.50 | 4.00 | 1.0 | 4.00 | 1.00 |
| Flagstaff | 3.00 | 2.29 | 8.45 | 8.41 | 3.50 | 3.86 | 4.79 | 4.14 |
| Foothills | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 2.00 | 0.00 | 6.43 | 1.29 |
| Forty Mile | 0.00 | 0.00 | 13.20 | 3.40 | 4.12 | 1.38 | 2.84 | 1.42 |
| Grande Prairie | 2.24 | 2.41 | 2.33 | 1.00 | 2.33 | 1.00 | 1.08 | 0.50 |
| Hanna | 8.82 | 7.26 | 16.90 | 20.90 | 15.80 | 18.70 | 37.90 | 18.80 |
| Kneehill | 2.90 | 1.20 | .90 | 1.20 | 1.58 | 0.79 | 3.14 | 0.93 |
| Lac Ste. Anne | 0.00 | 0.00 | 15.00 | 4.00 | 2.00 | 0.00 | 9.83 | 15.80 |
| Lacombe | 1.64 | 1.32 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 4.00 | 1.00 |
| Lakeland | 1.57 | 1.43 | 7.50 | 14.00 | 4.00 | 3.76 | 14.50 | 14.60 |
| Lamont | 0.00 | 0.00 | 9.00 | 2.00 | 6.00 | 2.00 | 8.32 | 1.92 |
| Leduc | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 2.78 | 1.22 | 2.71 | 5.29 |
| Lethbridge | 0.07 | 0.07 | 6.30 | 3.45 | 8.03 | 8.33 | 5.39 | 2.86 |
| Minburn | 0.00 | 0.00 | 5.00 | 1.20 | 2.00 | 1.00 | 5.52 | 4.10 |
| Mountain View | 0.88 | 0.92 | 0.52 | 0.57 | 2.00 | 1.00 | 1.31 | 1.00 |
| Newell | 1.33 | 1.03 | 0.79 | 0.66 | 3.17 | 2.71 | 3.60 | 2.42 |
| Oyen | 10.60 | 3.15 | 15.80 | 12.60 | 16.10 | 11.40 | 18.70 | 20.70 |
| Paintearth | 2.50 | 1.00 | 8.87 | 8.87 | 7.51 | 10.20 | 12.10 | 16.50 |
| Parkland | 1.18 | 0.64 | 4.71 | 7.71 | 0.00 | 0.0 | 16.80 | 12.60 |
| Peigan | 1.60 | 0.40 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 3.00 | 1.00 | 9.00 | 2.00 |
| Pincher Creek | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.07 | 0.11 | 0.69 | 0.45 | 4.56 | 1.75 |
| Ponoka | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.57 | 0.14 | 0.23 | 0.0 | 2.20 | 0.60 |
| Provost | 3.38 | 1.88 | 8.06 | 3.25 | 10.40 | 6.13 | 22.50 | 6.63 |
| Red Deer | 0.00 | 0.00 | 3.04 | 2.20 | 2.25 | 2.05 | 4.74 | 2.71 |
| Rocky View | 1.08 | 0.67 | 0.0 | 0.00 | 3.88 | 1.29 | 7.00 | 2.25 |
| Smoky Lake | 1.50 | 0.33 | 5.00 | 1.67 | 5.00 | 1.67 | 14.50 | 4.75 |
| St.Paul | 0.00 | 0.00 | 4.00 | 4.09 | 6.00 | 2.00 | 9.89 | 6.50 |
| Starland | 3.26 | 2.53 | 2.71 | 1.47 | 3.32 | 2.16 | 4.05 | 2.95 |
| Stettler | 7.70 | 16.50 | 13.40 | 3.31 | 7.05 | 9.26 | 5.88 | 6.78 |
| Strathcona | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 5.00 | 3.00 |
| Sturgeon | 6.50 | 5.20 | 0.57 | 1.14 | 0.82 | 0.36 | .79 | 2.37 |
| Taber | 4.49 | 1.37 | 9.11 | 7.65 | 11.60 | 9.21 | 6.32 | 5.08 |
| Thorhild | 0.00 | 0.00 | 18.00 | 4.00 | 0.00 | 0.0 | 7.09 | 5.91 |
| Two Hills | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.10 | 0.0 | 16.30 | 9.57 | 1.42 | 0.16 |
| Vermilion River | 0.00 | 0.00 | 6.00 | 1.40 | 4.00 | 1.00 | 9.20 | 2.80 |
| Vulcan | 3.82 | 2.38 | 4.47 | 1.58 | 13.40 | 3.33 | 5.71 | 2.58 |
| Wainwright | 6.52 | 8.87 | 8.81 | 2.31 | 6.56 | 2.31 | 7.19 | 2.31 |
| Warner | 2.04 | 0.94 | 7.18 | 3.69 | 5.56 | 3.41 | 6.16 | 3.31 |
| Westlock | 0.60 | 0.80 | 12.90 | 20.50 | 7.25 | 7.25 | 9.75 | 11.30 |
| Wetaskiwin | 2.08 | 2.15 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 13.20 | 3.92 |
| Wheatland | 1.18 | 1.08 | 0.76 | 0.53 | 0.13 | 0.05 | 0.84 | 0.62 |
| Willow Creek | 1.09 | 0.74 | 1.08 | 1.10 | 1.68 | 1.30 | 3.45 | 1.78 |
| Yellowhead | | | 17.70 | 25.00 | 2.00 | 0.00 | 11.50 | 18.30 |

*Cont'd on page 3*

"The numbers are compiled by Dr. Dan Johnson and his technician Craig Andrews, with the Lethbridge Research Centre," adds Calpas. "Johnson is a leading authority on the generation of insect risk assessment maps and grasshoppers. He is the person who generates the grasshopper risk assessment map for Alberta. Many factors are included in constructing the map, information about the various microclimates throughout the province, as well as the distribution of the different pest grasshopper species and their lifecycles. It's much more involved than just mapping the grasshopper count numbers. The grasshopper risk assessment map is expected to be ready before the middle of February. It will be posted on Alberta Agriculture's website very soon.

### Conditions contributing to grasshopper problems

"Conditions in the fall of 2001 were dry and open, meaning female hoppers had very good conditions for egg laying. The mild winter also favors hopper egg survival. All things considered, the only environmental factor that could help control the grasshoppers for this coming year is wet conditions during the grasshopper hatch."

Alberta is not expected to necessarily come out of the drought this year and that being the case, producers are wise to plan for the worst. Grasshopper outbreaks and drought conditions generally go hand-in-hand. Drought weakens the plants, and the hot dry conditions speed the grasshoppers metabolism to feed heavily. Crop plants are unable to recover from the constant heavy feeding and crops can be lost.

"The best course of action for dealing with the threat from grasshoppers is to be aware of what is happening in your fields and in your area," says Calpas. "Last year's hot spots are the first places that should be monitored for problems this year. Also, keep a close eye on areas within the fields where there was any green plant material last fall, as the females would have been looking for food as they laid their eggs. Old slough beds are prime areas because they may have had more plants growing in and around them late in the season. Be aware of the possibility of full field infestations, especially in minimum till fields. Normally we consider that hoppers move into the fields from the ditches and headlands, but if green plants were present in the field last fall, the females could have laid eggs throughout the entire field."

### Grasshopper management

The main pest grasshopper species are the clear-winged, migratory, two-striped and Packard's. Young hoppers will begin to hatch anywhere from between early May to mid-June, depending on weather conditions. The very young hoppers are about four to five millimetres long and range from dark brown, tan to green in colour. Monitor fields closely while the young plants are emerging because if there are young hoppers present they will attack the plants. In situations where there are full-field infestations, the young plants throughout the entire field are simultaneously attacked.

"Young grasshoppers are very susceptible to insecticides, but avoid spraying Sevin if there is not much foliage on the crop," advises Calpas. "Sevin requires a fairly well established plant canopy if it is to work well because control is primarily obtained when young hoppers feed on plants that have been sprayed with Sevin. This does not apply to the Sevin-based bran baits. Bran baits work well in dry weather. There are a number of chemical options for grasshopper control and producers are advised to consult Alberta Agriculture's *Crop Protection 2002* (Blue Book) for more information. Always read and follow label directions when handling any chemical."

Base decisions to apply insecticides on the control thresholds, 13+ hoppers per square metre in the field and 25+ hoppers in the roadside ditches are the thresholds under adequate crop moisture conditions. When conditions are dry and the plants are stressed, control may be required at seven hoppers per square metre in the field and 13 hoppers per square metre in roadside ditches. The decision to apply chemical control measures also depends on the yield potential of the crop, is it worth spraying?

In some small field situations a trap strip can be planted ahead of the main crop with a fast growing plant such as barley. Any young hoppers present will be attracted to the plants in this strip and may concentrate in this area. Then, the area can be sprayed. However, Johnson cautions that this does not always work.

"As a last resort, if grasshoppers are hatching out in very large numbers in a part of the field, the area can be cultivated if growers feel that they can bury them deep enough," says Calpas.

It's also a good idea to get together with neighbours to plan a strategy for control. Grasshoppers will move into fields from areas where they have not been controlled and where the food supply is exhausted.

Some producers have been inquiring if there are crops that are less susceptible to grasshopper attack. In situations where there has been high grasshopper pressure, hoppers have been reported eating the needles off of spruce trees. Johnson even saw them eat the paint of off farm buildings during the last big outbreak in 1985 and 1986.

"Grasshoppers will eat almost anything when food is scarce," continues Calpas. "For this reason it's difficult to avoid losses to grasshoppers by rotating crops, although you are generally at less risk when rotating crops in your fields. Different grasshopper species have recognized feeding preferences, and there are some differences in preferences within a crop type. For example, clear-winged grasshoppers prefer to feed on grasses and cereals, but prefer wheat and barley over oats. However, when there is high grasshopper pressure, all crops are at risk."

*Cont'd on page 4*

Johnson agrees that oats are not preferred by grasshoppers, but he adds that there are not too many dryland crops that they will not eat. They rarely seem to bother peas or chickpeas, even when the irrigation is off for some time. Lentils can be seriously damaged by very low numbers of grasshoppers. Flax seems to suffer more later in the summer than earlier. Canola can be damaged when it is very young, and again when the pods are ripening, but it is fairly safe in the period in-between, except for the field margins next to grass roadsides and pasture. Alfalfa can be turned into a field of stems by grasshoppers when it is hot and dry. Corn is heavily damaged only if not irrigated.

For additional information on grasshoppers and control strategies, check the following websites:

- Alberta Agriculture <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca> follow the link **Pests and Diseases**, **Plant Insects** and then **Cereal Crops** and you will find the grasshopper information.
- Grasshoppers of Wyoming <http://www.sdvc.uwyo.edu/grasshopper/>
  This site has information on the Reduced Agent and Area Treatments (RATTs) approach, a strategy for rangeland grasshopper management.
- Dr. Dan Johnson, Lethbridge Research Station <http://res2.agr.ca/lethbridge/scitech/dlj/johnsond.htm>
  This is an excellent website with considerable grasshopper information. Johnson often has the most up-to-date information on the grasshopper situation as the season progresses. He also produces the grasshopper risk assessment map for Alberta, and the map is posted on this site first.

*Contact:* *Jim Calpas*
*(780) 422-4911*

## 2001 Alberta Agriculture water pumping program

The Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development water pumping program is a service designed to help producers obtain surface water for domestic and livestock use during times of drought or low water supply. The program maintains and distributes a fleet of over 100 pipe and pump units across agricultural regions of Alberta where there is demand.

"In response to a gloomy water supply prospect in 2000 for rural residents and producers, the program was enhanced by a $2 million investment by the Alberta Government into additional equipment, increasing its capacity by approximately one-third," says Murray Tenove, water quality engineer with Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton. "Previously, in 1999, other improvements were made to efficiently monitor, react to extra demand and report on the program. Rental rates in 2000 were cut in half for clients accessing the program, and 892 clients used it. All these measures prepared the Regional Advisory Services and Technical Services Division staff for the even greater task in 2001."

Snowpack in the spring of 2001 was much reduced from previous years and the program was deployed 12 days early on March 19, to take advantage of what run-off could be caught. Standard rental rates to access the program were once again reduced in half to make the program more affordable to the already drought stressed producers. Many of these producers needed to string the portable pipe even further to access the water supplies required.

On June 10, other drought response measures, such as acreage payments on pasture and the Alberta Farm Water Program were announced. Many of these new but dry water dugouts required filling and created extra demand on the program deliverers. "As the water supply situation was severe in almost all areas of the province until the end of August, the program had to run flat out," continues Seiferling. "An all time record of 1,354 clients were provided use of the equipment. The client numbers were great but the activity and co-operation required to deliver this was even greater with the number and complexity of multi-mile jobs required."

In review, the 2001 activity was 158 per cent of 2000 and 190 per cent of 1999, which were busy years from previous levels. The availability and use of the larger 8-inch equipment greatly increased the program's capability in the 2001 season.

"The amount of time and effort put in by the drivers and maintenance people alone, not even including the regional co-ordinators, is estimated greater that 19,000 hours," says Tenove. "The staff delivering the program measured up to the formidable task in a caring and efficient manner, once again receiving no complaints about the service provided or the condition and suitability of the equipment provided."

In preparation for a low run-off situation again in the spring of 2002, measures have already been taken. Equipment is being checked over, repaired and deployed to secure locations within various regions as part of an efficient back-haul arrangement from the winter maintenance areas. Manpower and resources for the short maintenance season are already geared up to have the equipment ready for a repeat performance, if required.

*Contact:* *Murray Tenove*
*(780) 427-4182*

*Cont'd on page 5*

## Farmers to get $3 million hail rebate for 2001

Alberta farmers who purchased straight hail insurance from the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC) in 2001 will receive a premium rebate totaling approximately $3 million.

"The hail rebate will certainly provide some welcome financial relief to many farmers who faced tough growing conditions on the farm in 2001," says Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. An estimated 6,250 AFSC hail insurance clients will receive the rebate.

Although many areas of the province suffered hail damage in 2001, it was a relatively low-risk year for hail. Losses were estimated at $11.1 million for 2001, compared to the previous year's payout of $32.3 million.

AFSC straight hail insurance is a self-sustaining farmer-funded program, with no government contribution to premiums. In 2001, AFSC collected $14.9 million in hail insurance premiums. When premiums collected are higher than the claims paid out, AFSC rebates a portion of the premiums back to the farmer.

The straight hail policyholder rebate will be based on 20 per cent of the premium paid for those who did not have a 2001 claim, and 10 per cent for those with a claim. The premium rebate is calculated for each contract, by crop on a township basis. Premium rebate cheques were mailed directly to clients in January 2002.

AFSC is a provincial crown corporation that provides farmers and agri-businesses with financial services including crop insurance, farm income disaster protection and farm and agri-business loans.

*Contact:* *Merle Jacobson*
*Senior Manager, Insurance Services*
*AFSC*
*(403) 782-8229*

*Terry Willock*
*Director, Communications*
*Alberta Agriculture*
*(780) 422-7683*

For toll-free connection outside Edmonton, dial 310-0000.

## Abortions in beef herds

When one or two beef cows in a herd abort, producers often ask themselves if it's the start of a problem or just 'one of those things'.

"Beef cows do abort. When it's all averaged out, for there to be a two to three per cent abortion rate (2 or 3 cows out of 100) is about normal," says Bill Grabowsky, beef specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "Anything above that level occurring over a short period of time, should be a concern. Around January or February, the provincial beef specialists start to hear about, or see the occasional abortion. Generally, abortions often go unnoticed at any stage of pregnancy for whatever reason and no one thinks there's a problem. Concerns are often raised when producers actually see the aborted fetus when checking the cows."

Although it is something that does naturally occur, questions should be asked whatever the numbers involved. There are many reasons why cattle abort and many of these abortions go undiagnosed. The best advice for producers is to document any and all possible reasons for the abortions and discuss them with his or her veterinarian. Documentation is a must for all yearly herd management decisions and having a record of these decisions is critical.

"Producers need to have knowledge of any new herd additions or contacts, and past and present feeding programs," adds Grabowsky. "Cattle owners should also provide feed and water analysis data to help determine if the cause of the abortions might be related to the water (nitrates) or the feed (ergot). Dates and kinds of vaccination protocols are very important. Having access to samples of fresh, unfrozen afterbirth and fetuses from the aborted females is just one of the keys to answering an abortion puzzle. Supplying fresh, salvageable afterbirth products will be one of the hardest jobs, but the chances of identifying the problem increases greatly when the laboratory receives these products."

The reasons for abortions amounts to a long list, but the causes may have to do with nutrition, parasites, viruses, diseases or the physical condition of the cow's uterus. Abortions do not always occur at the same time. Some may occur in the early stages of pregnancy while others occur in the second and third stages. If you look at a bovine virus diarrhea (BVD) abortion, it usually occurs in early stages or during the first three months. An infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR) abortion usually occurs in the latter stages, probably in the last three months. Some of these viral diseases can be prevented with vaccinations while others, like mycotic abortions (caused by molds), can not be vaccinated against. Some abortions maybe caused by trauma, twinning, infections or even from genetic defects.

*Cont'd on page 6*

"There will be abortion problems for some producers this year," says Grabowsky. "Some abortions will go unnoticed, some will involve considerable losses and some will be unanswered. The big concern is that cow-calf producers have the ability to help themselves reduce or eliminate this problem. The best place to start is to involve your veterinarian, document management changes, keep records and adopt best management practices for your cow herd."

*Contact:* *Bill Grabowsky* *Agriculture Helpline*
*(780) 361-1240* *1-866-882-7677*

## Salmonella cases prompt investigation

Alberta Health and Wellness is involved with a national investigation of salmonella infections.

As of January 21, 2002, 111 people in Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Ontario had fallen ill since mid-December, 2001, after becoming infected with *Salmonella oranienberg*. Of that number, 52 cases of *Salmonella oranienberg* were identified in Alberta. Cases have been identified in almost all of the province's regional health authorities.

"Although the risk of infection is considered to be very low, salmonella can pose a health hazard in the elderly and young children, who may become dehydrated. Our efforts with the federal government and other provinces right now are focussed on finding the source of these cases," says Dr. Karen Grimsrud, Alberta's acting provincial health officer with Alberta Health and Wellness, Edmonton. Salmonella infections are most commonly linked to many different types of raw and ready-to-eat food products. Based on the pattern of the current infection, officials believe the source of the current infections is a particular food product and are working to identify it.

Most salmonella infections last only a short time and have relatively mild symptoms, such as abdominal pain, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting and fever. Occasionally, more serious infections can occur.

Some simple steps will help to reduce the risk of salmonella infection. It is important to wash foods, food preparation surfaces, utensils and one's hands often when preparing food or when handling pets and pet treats. Ensuring that raw and cooked foods are kept separate, using appropriate cooking temperatures and times, and refrigerating leftovers promptly will also help.

### *Salmonella Facts*

- salmonella is a bacterial disease commonly associated with gastroenteritis, with sudden onset of abdominal pain, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting and fever
- there are 800 - 900 sporadic or unrelated cases of salmonella infection each year in Alberta
- *salmonella oranienberg* is a strain of the bacteria not commonly seen in Alberta. There are, on average, only two cases of this strain identified in Alberta each year
- salmonella bacteria can be present in raw or undercooked meats (especially chicken), eggs and other food products such bean sprouts and unwashed melons
- contact can also be made with the bacteria when handling reptiles, or some pet treats such as pigs' ears

### *Avoiding salmonella infection*

Generally, to prevent salmonella infections, four simple steps in food preparation and handling should be followed:

- cook foods to proper temperatures
- refrigerate unused foods promptly
- prevent cross contamination by separating cooked and raw foods
- wash surfaces, utensils and hands often

Salmonella is passed in an infected person's stool, and can spread to other people. People who are infected should:

- wash their hands thoroughly after going to the toilet
- avoid handling food that others will eat
- avoid providing care for patients or young children

*Contact:* *Dr. Karen Grimsrud*
*Provincial Medical Officer of Health,*
*Alberta Health and Wellness*
*(780) 427-5263*

For toll-free access in Alberta, dial 310-0000

## Prairie Pesticide Minor Use Consortium

The Prairie Pesticide Minor Use Consortium (PPMUC) has just completed its first year of operation. The Consortium was set up with the intention of facilitating the registration of minor use pesticides, to meet the needs of its members. The founding members were Agricore United, Beans and Special Crops Unit; Alberta Pulse Growers Commission; Alberta Irrigated Alfalfa Seed Producers Association; Potato Growers of Alberta; Red Hat Co-operative Ltd.; and, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Since its inception, three additional members have joined the Consortium, Alberta Vegetable Growers (Processing), Saskatchewan Alfalfa Seed Growers Association and Prairie Natural Processing Inc.

*Cont'd on page 7*

"Access to effective pest management tools is a key prerequisite for successful crop diversification," says Rudy Esau, minor use officer with Alberta Agriculture, Brooks. "Growers have often found a lack of effective pest control methods, especially registered pesticides for low-acreage, high-value crops. In addition, on-farm food safety programs require producers to keep careful records of all their production inputs. The use of unregistered pesticides is not only illegal, but it can render crops unmarketable."

In the past year, the Consortium has submitted four minor use proposals, three emergency registrations, and followed up on some previous minor use submissions. Its first minor use approval was received in December 2001 for Odyssey herbicide. Odyssey has been registered as a post-emergence treatment for the control of certain weeds in seedling and established alfalfa grown for seed. Two of the three emergency registration requests were also approved. The program is currently working on four new proposals.

A board of directors, with Blair Roth as chairman, directs the operations of the Consortium. Esau, the minor use procurement officer, handles the preparation of submissions. Esau is employed on a half-time basis and can be contacted at Alberta Agriculture's Crop Diversification Centre South.

In addition to submitting minor use requests, Esau also stays current on pest management technology in those crops represented by Consortium members.

"The pests on this watch list could form the basis of future research or a minor use submission," adds Esau. "The Consortium is open to new members and looks forward to addressing the pest management needs of prairie growers in 2002."

*Contact:* *Rudy Esau*
*(403) 362-1304*

# Agri-News Briefs

## Wills and succession planning seminars

A farm management seminar, *Wills & Business Succession,* is being offered at several locations throughout the province by the Farm Estate Advisory Group. The seminar covers several aspects of farm management, including: incorporation, holding companies, shareholders' agreements, buy/sell agreements, wills, powers of attorney, trusts, family and business communication, and succession planning. Cost of the seminar is $49 per family. The seminar is being offered:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| February 13, 2002 | Delia | Community Centre |
| February 19, 2002 | Carstairs | Half Century Club |
| February 21, 2002 | Lloydminster | Lakeland College |
| February 27, 2002 | Barrhead | Summerdale Hall |
| March 5, 2002 | Rocky Mountain House | Rocky Legion |
| March 7, 2002 | Red Deer | Capri Hotel |
| March 13, 2002 | Lamont | Recreation Centre |

For further information or to register, contact the Farm Estate Advisory Group at 1-866-487-5202 or e-mail <rabaker@interbaun.com>.

## Accessing the retail market workshop

A one-day workshop featuring successful strategies for accessing the retail market, obtaining a product listing and pricing products is being offered in three locations in Alberta by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. The workshop, *Price It Right – Marketing to Retail,* will be beneficial to Albertans preparing to present a new product. Learn what it takes to get a listing with a distributor, wholesaler or retailer and gain insight into the food industry from their perspective. The workshop will cover: risks potential buyers experience; direct and indirect costs associated with the production of a product; the importance of marketing research in positioning a product; the logistics in getting a product to market; marketing plans; setting cost price; and, making buyer presentations. Cost of the workshop is $50 per person (plus $3.50 GST). The workshop is being held:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| February 19, 2002 | Leduc | Food Processing Development Centre |
| March 5, 2002 | Medicine Hat | Provincial Building |
| March 12, 2002 | Red Deer | Provincial Building |

For further information or to register, contact Allan Pelletier at (780) 422-2591 or e-mail <allan.pelletier@gov.ab.ca>.

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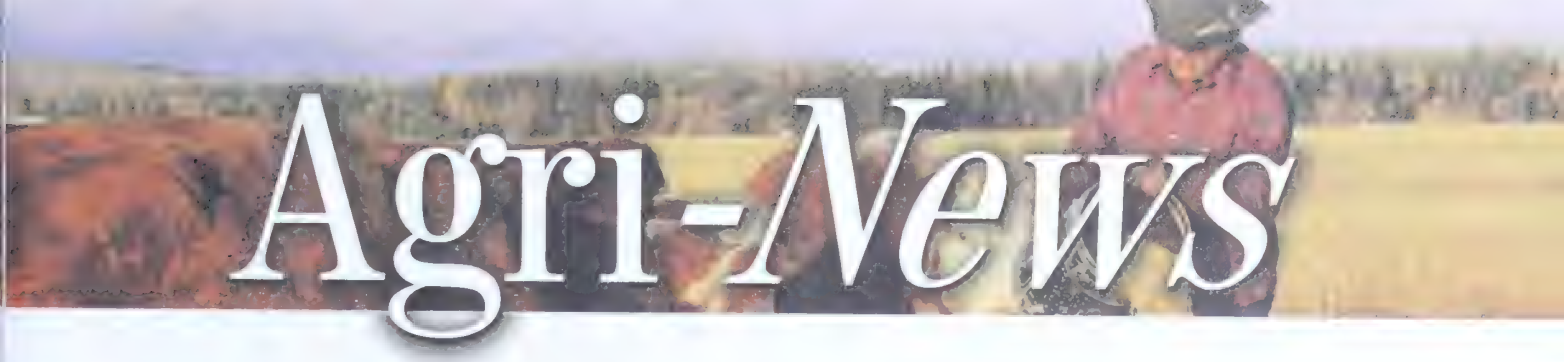

# Agri-News

February 18, 2002

## Reducing greenhouse gas emissions: saving more than the environment

By reducing greenhouse gas emissions the livestock, cropping and agri-food processing industries will address concerns for the environment regarding climate change and can reduce their own input costs.

Most greenhouse gases occur naturally. The major greenhouse gases in the atmosphere include water vapour, carbon dioxide, methane, halocarbons and nitrous oxide. Greenhouse gases control the earth's climate by trapping heat in the earth's atmosphere and keeping the planet warm enough to support life. The main greenhouse gases produced by the agriculture industry are nitrous oxide (from fertilizer) and methane (from livestock). The agriculture sector is responsible for about 12 per cent of the total greenhouse gas emissions in Canada.

Shane Chetner, an agricultural air issues specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, urges farmers and processors to find out more about how they can decrease the amount of greenhouse gas emissions they release into the atmosphere.

"Farmers, ranchers and food processors must be aware of the greenhouse gas emission sources and carbon sinks on the farm and in processing plants. For farmers, reducing greenhouse gas emissions means growing crops and raising livestock more efficiently, and cutting back on inputs such as nitrogen and energy," says Chetner.

Adopting farming practices that reduce the amount of greenhouse gas released can contribute to more efficient use of resources. For example, farming practices such as direct seeding, minimum tillage and reduced fallow can reduce fossil fuel consumption, decreasing input costs and providing financial benefits.

"More efficient use of resources means lower input costs and increased profitability. Reducing emissions can improve the industry's production efficiencies, conserve soil and water resources, and contribute to efforts to sustain the environment," adds Chetner.

Livestock producers also have a role to play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The greenhouse gases produced by livestock manure are methane and nitrous oxide. By increasing the efficiency of manure use (e.g., aerobic composting and balancing manure applications with the nutrient requirements of crops), farmers can decrease input costs at the same time as they decrease greenhouse gas emissions.

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## This Week

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"To improve nitrogen-use efficiency and decrease costs, farmers should consider practices such as optimizing the timing of nitrogen application, changing from fall to spring fertilizer application and changing the application method from broadcast to banding," says Chetner.

There are many practices that farmers and processors can adopt that will reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. Many will not only help decrease input costs, but also help contribute to a sustainable environment.

For more information on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, contact the Conservation and Development Branch of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (780) 422-4385 (toll free by dialing 310-0000 first). A series of free information bulletins on various topics related to greenhouse gases is also available. Information on reducing greenhouse gas emissions is also posted on the Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development website at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca> click on *Land, Water and Climate* and then *Climate and Air Quality*.

*Contact: Shane Chetner*
*(780) 427-3615*

# Going organic

The third annual Growing Organic conference is being held on March 11 and 12, 2002 at the Capri Centre in Red Deer. The conference, organized by the Alberta Organic Association, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, is of particular interest to producers already involved in or considering organic production.

"This rare opportunity to interact with these leaders and innovators in the organic community should make this a conference to remember," says Mike Dolinski, organic specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton.

Topics and speakers for the conference have been chosen specifically to present timely research and information. They include:

### Production

- *Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada – How Can We Serve?* - **Dr. Ralph Martin**, professor in plant science at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College and the architect of the Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada
- *Soil Health and the Benefits of Soil Biological Fertility* - **Dr. Jill Clapperton**, world class soil biologist with five years of field research evaluating various cropping systems for impact on biological life in the soil
- *Making Organic Sustainable: Lessons from 10 Years of Research* - **Dr. Martin Entz**, professor in plant science at the University of Manitoba. Entz has the oldest organic research plots in Western Canada
- *The Precautionary Principle of Biotechnology and it's Implications to Organics* - **Dr. Katherine Barrett**, research associate with the Eco-Research Chair of Environmental Law and Policy at the University of Victoria and project director with the Science and Health Network, has recently completed her Ph.D. on Canada's environmental regulations for genetically modified crops
- *Mechanical Weed Control in Organic Systems* - Eric Johnson, weed biologist who completed his Master's Degree on mechanical weed management. He is involved in the organic program at the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Research Station in Scott, Sask.

### Marketing

- *North American Organics: Past, Present and Future* - **Mark Retzloff** has been involved in the organic and natural food industry for 32 years and is co-founder of Eden Foods, Horizon Organic Dairy and Alfalfa's Market
- *The U.S. Organic Industry – A Look at 2002 and Beyond* - **Katherine DiMatteo**, who for 12 years has been involved in advocating for changes in U.S. federal policies and individual behaviour in order to create a more sustainable world
- *The Organic Consumer Profile* - **Rosalie Cunningham**, MBA, market research officer with Alberta Agriculture

"The two-day conference also includes two **Ask the Experts** panel sessions. The first is on production field management techniques for organic crops with experienced producers. The second is an open forum where participants will have an opportunity to talk and network with principal buyers from several markets," adds Dolinski.

Full registration, if received before March 1, 2002, is $135 per person or $225 per farm unit (two people). After March 1, the cost of registration is $150 per person or $235 per farm unit (two people). The single day rate is $80. A full student registration is $60.

For further information or to request a registration form, ask for the Growing Organic Conference at (403) 578-3970 or toll free in Alberta at 1-800-387-6030. Mail registration forms and registration fees to:

Growing Organic Conference
Box 160
Coronation, AB T0C 1C0

A trade show is being held in conjunction with the conference. Draped trade show space is available at a cost of $400. This fee includes one conference registration. For information about trade show space or sponsorship participation, contact Dolinski at (780) 422-4873.

*Contact: Mike Dolinski*
*(780) 422-4873*

*Cont'd on page 3*

## Farmers cultivate fresh and productive ties with chefs

Diners may not always realize it, but some chefs go to great lengths to bring the freshest possible produce to their dining tables, which lends support to small, local growers. Selling direct to restaurants eliminates the middlemen, just as selling direct to consumers does. By assuming traditional wholesaler functions, many growers can reap more profits by selling their products directly to executive chefs, restaurants and food service establishments.

"Working with small suppliers requires more time, planning and support from the executive chefs than does dealing with wholesalers," says Janice McGregor, rural development specialist - business, at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre North, Edmonton. "However, many chefs are willing to buy local and develop individual working relationships with producers and processors. Many chefs are willing to make the extra effort to get high quality and specialty items that are grown right here in Alberta."

Restaurants still demand the same quality and service from the farmer that they get from a wholesaler. They demand consistent quality, size and weight of products, convenient ordering, frequent delivery, competitive pricing, clean product that is properly packaged and labelled, and follow-up service.

"Some restaurant menus may feature farm names and locations. Many executive chefs make patrons aware of where the ingredients come from by noting them on the menu. Packrat Louie Kitchen & Bar features table cards that provide additional information about the farmers and the products they supply to the restaurant," adds McGregor.

The development of a profitable direct-to-restaurant business can take several years. An effective relationship with a chef involves annual planning to help the chef learn which specialty products can be grown in the area and what products can be supplied for the coming year.

Some producers have formed marketing alliances to supply the needed variety and volume of product to individual hotel and restaurant chains. This ensures a much broader supply of product and allows individual producers the opportunity to specialize in one or two items while ensuring that the restaurants enjoy a full spectrum of products to meet their specifications. Efficiencies in transportation and delivery can also be achieved if one individual co-ordinates the pick-up and delivery of product from a number of farms.

"Most fine dining establishments develop menus twice a year that capture the spring/summer season and the fall/winter season," continues McGregor. "Producers need to be prepared to supply product for the entire six months their products are featured on the menu. Chefs must know if suppliers are unable to meet their commitment so that alternate arrangements for product delivery can be made. Using words such as "fresh, seasonal vegetables" in their menu descriptions allows chefs the flexibility to feature a variety of items or substitute if an item is not available when required."

Jasmin Kobajica, an executive Chef at the Chateau Lacombe Crowne Plaza in Edmonton, explains that communication between chef and producer is critical. Attending a farm tour allowed him to see where the products come from, how they are grown and what obstacles the growers face. Kobajica is constantly on the lookout for specialty items such as sweetgrass, Muscovy duck, whole dressed rabbit and individual 25 ml jars of jam for breakfast and brunch buffets.

"Chefs who are passionate about flavour and quality are willing supporters of regional cuisine and will make the effort to work with individual producers who are committed to supplying the food service industry," says McGregor. "Interested producers need to be market-ready before they approach chefs and food service distributors with their products."

For more information on regional cuisine and supplying the food service industry, contact Janice McGregor at (780) 415-2317 (toll free in Alberta through the RITE operator at 310-0000)

*Contact Janice McGregor*
*(780) 415-2317*
*e-mail <janice.mcgregor@gov.ab.ca>*

## Agreement bolsters pulse crop research

Canada's already burgeoning pulse crop industry got a boost on January 31, 2002 with the announcement that the federal and Alberta agriculture departments are banding together to establish a field pea breeding program

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development will house the pea breeding program at AAFC's Lacombe Research Centre. This initiative expands the innovative Canada-Alberta Research Agreement, under which federal and provincial scientists co-operate to accelerate barley and forage-beef research. AAFC's financial commitment of human resources and equipment is more than $400,000.

AAFC Minister Lyle Vanclief praised the venture. "This partnership will help expand Canada's role as a world leader in research and innovation by assisting farmers to produce crops that will not only flourish in Western Canada's growing conditions, but will enable them to respond to the demand for those goods in the national and international market."

*Cont'd on page 4*

"Our research goal is to improve our status as a world-class producer of peas and fababeans," said Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

"Alberta's farmers, processors and exporters can expect major economic benefit from research focusing on disease-resistant pulse crops unique to our climate," she told pulse growers attending the FarmTech 2002 conference in Red Deer.

The immediate goal of the research agreement is to breed high-yielding, disease-resistant, field pea cultivars that can withstand the cool, moist growing regions of Western Canada. In addition to improved crop diversification options for Alberta producers, this research will help Alberta's agri-food sector create more market opportunities for value-added products for the benefit of all Canadians.

Canada's pulse industry, which includes peas, lentils, chickpeas and white and coloured beans, has enjoyed rapid growth in recent years and Canada is now the world's leading exporter of peas and lentils. Alberta alone produces about 284,000 hectares of field peas, while the total in the Prairies reached 1.4 million hectares in 2001.

Dennis Dalton, president of the Alberta Pulse Growers, said he expects pulse acres to reach 25 per cent of Alberta's seeded acres by 2010, with growth driven by better varieties. Pulse Canada, a strong supporter of this effort, has named variety development as one of its national research strategy components.

"This new pulse breeding program is a result of a high level of co-operation and consultation between growers and both levels of government," added Dalton.

Partnerships such as this are cornerstones of the Agricultural Policy Framework accepted in principle by the federal, provincial and territorial agriculture ministers in June 2001. The framework will provide the sector with the means to move from crisis management to investment for long-term success. It will also position Canada as first in the world for quality and safety, environmental responsibility and innovative agricultural production.

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*AAFC - Ottawa, ON*
*(613) 759-7972*

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*Director, Crop Diversification -*
*Alberta Agriculture*
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*Communications Director,*
*Alberta Agriculture*
*(780) 422-7683 ***

*Dennis Dalton*
*President, Alberta Pulse Growers*
*(780) 842-2361*

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*(780) 986-9398*

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*Director of Research, Pulse Canada*
*(306) 651-0858*

*** Government of Alberta numbers are toll free in the province by dialing 310-0000 and then the number.*

## Conference leads to collaborative efforts in land use

The ***Land Supports Us All – Land Use Conference*** brought together people from all walks of life to share information and continue a process of developing a common economic goal and vision for land use.

"It was amazing to see everyone listening and learning from each other," says Harvey Buckley, chair of the conference planning committee. "We are ecstatic that people see the importance of land and the need to collectively discuss its use."

The conference, an industry initiative, was endorsed by a number of industry and government stakeholders. Representatives from oil and gas, forestry, tourism, recreation, agriculture and mineral extraction companies; environmental advocacy groups; urban and rural planners; three levels of government; and, aboriginal groups attended this open forum. Participants listened to and shared ideas and strategies for land use.

The first night's keynote speaker set the mood of the conference.

"The future of successful natural resources management lies in co-operation and collaboration across disciplinary and operational lines," said Dr. Jack Ward Thomas an internationally respected wildlife biologist, author and Chief Emeritus of the U.S. Forest Service.

Dr. Brad Stelfox, a noted land use ecologist, led Tuesday's line up of professionals. Stelfox presented a vision of Alberta's land as it is today. By overlapping the 'footprints' of individual land users, the increasing stresses that our land endures became evident. Each successive speaker, (planners, foresters, agriculturists, individuals in recreation and tourism, oil and gas executives, and mineral extractors) provided their individual strategies for land use. The common theme was that this collaborative and co-operative approach to land use planning must continue.

"How we use land really does affect everyone," says Les Brost, chair of Agrivantage, a group working to improve Agriculture and the Agri-food industry. "Everything from population

*Cont'd on page 5*

densities to food production practices can impact on public health because the way we manage land affects our soil, water and air. This conference was a step in a process where industry is taking a responsible, proactive approach to sustainable management."

The planning committee estimated and budgeted for 500 participants. Facilities were arranged to accommodate 650. Almost 700 participants registered and took part.

"The overwhelming interest in this conference is testimony to the need for it," says Buckley.

The conference proceedings are being compiled and should be available on the website <www.landuse.ab.ca> as they become available. The need to continue this collaborative and co-operative approach was evident. The content and timing of future co-ordinated efforts will be decided in the near future. Visit the website for more information.

Dr. Thomas said it best in his speech, "It is [everyone's] job ... to lead and get on with the business of living sustainably on spaceship earth. We have the most important jobs in the world - individually and collectively. For, if we fail, nothing else - absolutely nothing else - matters."

*Contact:* *Goldwin McEwen*
*(780) 439-4378*

# Agri-News Briefs

## Advisories from Alberta Farm Implement Act administration

**Beline Manufacturing Company Limited**, of Kindersley, Sask., closed its business on approximately November 9, 2001. Statutory warranty, as provided by the Alberta Farm Implement Act, will expire shortly. Any statutory warranty concerns or lack of retail agreement fulfillment not addressed by Beline Manufacturing Company Ltd. should be registered with the *Alberta Farm Implement Act* administration office at #305, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6 or phone (780) 427-2188. Government numbers are toll free within Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first

**Mel's Motors Ltd.**, of Edgerton, Alta., entered into receivership on January 18, 2002. Statutory warranty, as provided by the *Alberta Farm Implement Act*, will expire shortly. Any statutory warranty concerns or lack of retail agreement fulfillment not addressed by Mel's Motors Ltd. should be registered with the Alberta Farm Implement Act administration office at #305, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6 or phone (780) 427-2188. Government numbers are toll free within Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first

**Prairie Ag Inc.**, of Camrose, Alta., entered into receivership on August 17, 2001. Statutory warranty, as provided by the *Alberta Farm Implement Act*, will expire shortly. Any statutory warranty concerns or lack of retail agreement fulfillment not addressed by Prairie Ag Inc. should be registered with the Alberta Farm Implement Act administration office at #305, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6 or phone (780) 427-2188. Government numbers are toll free within Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first

For further information, contact the Farmers' Advocate Office at (780) 427-2188 and ask for Dennis Budney or Bernie Yakimyshyn.

## AIA 2002 conference

The Alberta Institute of Agrologists (AIA) 2002 Conference is being held at the Fantasyland Hotel in Edmonton on March 20 to 22, 2002. Anyone working in agriculture or in the resource and environmental services sectors (including biologists, educators, agrologists and engineers) is invited to attend. The theme is ***Building Bridges***, and it is expected that the conference will attract a broad range of participants from diverse disciplines. The program focuses on global changes - climatic, economic, technological, environmental and social - and their impacts on agri-food production, people and communities. Keynote speakers include Dr. Colin Soskolne, a world-renowned expert on the relationship of global ecological change and human health from the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Alberta, and Dr. Jim McLaren, the president and managing director of Inverizon International of St. Louis, Missouri. McLaren's company specializes in the management of technology and biotechnology for improved crop production and processing. Other speakers include: Dr. Andrew Fearne, Imperial College, UK; Jenny Hillard, Consumers Association of Canada; Karen Haugen-Kozyra, environmental management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development; Steve Morgan Jones, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada; Bryan Walton, Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors; Vic Adamowicz, Canada Research Chair, Environmental Economics, U of A; and, Jim Smith, Mancroft-EBA Engineering Consultants. For the complete program, list of speakers and registration details, please check the conference web page <http://www.aia.ab.ca/2002/>. The cost of the conference is $215 for AIA members and $265 for non-members. The early registration deadline is February 20, 2002. There is also a special student rate of $75.

*Cont'd on page 6*

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## Agrivalue Seminars

An agrivalue ™ seminar is coming to a community near you! Do you have an idea that could add value to an agricultural commodity? This is your chance to find out how to get your value-added idea or project off the ground! AVAC, together with local and regional partners, will provide valuable information on how you can locate the financial resources and knowledge needed to bring your ideas to life. These interactive, free seminars focus on how to develop an agrivalue™ business in rural Alberta. AVAC and its partners help you find capital and expertise for your business idea by bringing the people who supply the services right to you. The seminars are being held at:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Vermilion | February 27, 2002 | Lakeland College |
| Drumheller | February 28, 2002 | Drumheller Inn |
| Taber | March 6, 2002 | Heritage Inn |
| Lethbridge | March 7, 2002 | Ramada Inn |
| Fairview | March 12, 2002 | Fairview College |
| Barrhead | March 13, 2002 | Summerdale Community Centre |

AVAC Ltd. is a not-for-profit corporation that invests in innovative ideas that add value to agricultural commodities. It invests in coaching, knowledge, contacts and financial resources. Pre-registration is required, call 1-866-663-0652. For more information, contact Norman Leach toll free at 1-866-663-0652; fax 403-547-5857/403-547-5563 or e-mail <nsleach@telusplanet.net>.

Agri-News

February 25, 2002

## AESA's farm based program

The sustainability of Alberta's farms and ranches depends on practices that are environmentally and economically sound. The Farm Based Program, a component of the Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture (AESA) Program, has focused on encouraging such practices since it began in 1997. AESA Council is now making some important changes to the program.

"The changes to the Farm Based Program are being done to make the program more effective in responding to the challenges faced by the industry as it interacts with the environment and the urban population," says Carol Bettac, AESA program manager with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Throughout the changes to the Farm Based Program, one aspect of has remained constant, and that's the program's regional delivery. The Program has always advocated local solutions to local problems, with local manpower to deliver the goods. This is the basis of the success of program efforts.

The Farm Based Program is just one aspect of AESA's activities. Building partnerships with Growing Alberta and the Alberta Food Processors Association will be another standard to judge the success of AESA. Production, processing and packaging are all vital links in the chain to the consumer, and all must work within the context of environmental sustainability.

"In an effort to be more accountable and demonstrate progress, AESA Council has recently made three key changes to the Farm Based Program," says Carol Bettac, "The program is targeting three priority farm management issues – nutrient management, grazing and riparian management, and integrated crop management. It is moving to three-year program plans with specific measurable objectives. And it is emphasizing cooperation and partnerships."

Although survey results show increasing awareness and adoption of environmentally responsible agricultural practices, AESA Council is continuously assessing its programs and looking for ways to improve them. In November 1999, AESA Council conducted a review of the Farm Based Program that included feedback from the program's clients (the agricultural organizations and municipal agricultural service boards that deliver the program) and from the Farm Based regional committees, Council members and AESA staff.

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## This Week

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

"Council members decided the program needed to be more focused and target priority issues to achieve results in a more timely fashion," Bettac says. The changes were developed in 2000, shared and discussed with clients last fall and are now being implemented.

"Rather than taking a shotgun approach, doing a lot of activities directed at numerous issues, AESA Council felt it would be more cost-effective to target priority challenges facing the industry. If we can get a handle on these, there will be clear benefits for soil, water, air and biodiversity. And if we promote them from a farm management and economic point of view, we are more likely to be successful," she adds.

The move from one-year projects to three-year programs also offers advantages. Client feedback indicated that a commitment for longer term funding would reduce uncertainty and allow them to deliver better programs, for example by hiring staff with a longer commitment.

As well, three-year planning helps groups concentrate on where they want to go and how to get there. Each group identifies the needs of its clients and determines specific, measurable objectives to address those needs. All projects must be part of a three-year program, forming a comprehensive action plan to achieve the program's objectives.

"Partnering is not new to the Farm Based Program," notes Bettac. "There have been many successful examples of partnership-based programs over the years. Now, however, partnerships will be used as a criterion for evaluating applications. Because resources are limited, AESA Council has established collaboration and partnerships as a guiding principle to ensure effective and efficient use of industry and public resources."

For more information on AESA and the Farm Based Program, contact Bettac at (780) 427-3885 or e-mail <carol.bettac@gov.ab.ca>.

*Contact: Carol Bettac*
*(780) 427-3885*

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# Grain auger injury study

Between March 15 and July 13, 2000 there were 10 serious grain auger injuries reported in the southern Alberta region. These tragedies prompted a year-long project that began in March 2001. The North American Farm and Environmental Safety Centre conducted this study, with financial and technical support from the Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research, the Chinook Health Region and the Alberta Agriculture Ag Tech Centre.

"Through person-to-person, phone and self -surveys many farmers in southern Alberta were contacted, and 459 of them graciously consented to complete a grain auger usage survey," says Laura Nelson, program coordinator. "These surveys asked farmers very specific questions about their use of grain augers. Farmers were also asked for any suggestions they might have regarding the design of grain augers and how they could be changed to make them safer and easier to use."

Through farmer cooperation, much valuable information was collected.

"It was very surprising to have 46 of the 459 farmers report an auger injury," says Nelson. "This is an injury rate of 10 per cent. If this injury rate is carried forward to the provincial farm population of approximately 190 thousand, the possible number of farmers in Alberta who may have been involved in an auger accident at some time is staggering. From 1991 through 2000 there were 320 injuries reported in Alberta involving grain augers. Auger accidents are not uncommon."

The majority of the farmers involved in auger accidents (83%) were between 18 and 65 years of age. They were mature farmers with an average of 27 years of farming experience. Of the 46 farmers reporting injuries, 50 per cent mentioned carelessness, and 24 per cent mentioned inattention as being at least partially responsible for their injury. Fatigue may also be partially responsible – autumn afternoons were the most common time for injuries to occur.

"Our findings show that over 90 per cent of those injured in auger accidents are male," says Nelson. "This is as expected, because most farm machinery, including augers, is operated by men."

The severity of injuries resulting from auger accidents varies greatly. Only 11 per cent of those reporting injuries were able to keep working, while 25 per cent reported needing hospitalization. Bruising was the most common type of injury, reported by 32 per cent of respondents. Cuts were the second most common reported injury at 30 per cent and tragically, amputation was reported as being the result in 25 per cent of auger accidents. Fingers, hands and feet were involved in 74 per cent of these injuries.

- Contact with exposed auger blades or entanglement in exposed auger shafts were by far the most common injury events. In response to the question - was safety equipment in place at the time of your injury? - 80 per cent answered NO!
- Contact with exposed, moving parts causes the vast majority of auger injuries.

Why is safety equipment, which shields moving parts, so often not in place?

Farmers participating in this study listed three reasons as the most common causes of missing safety equipment:

- shields restrict the flow of grain
- with a shield in place, the auger won't fit into grain bin
- the auger was older, and when purchased did not have guards or shields in place

*Cont'd on page 3*

"These are valid concerns that manufacturers need to be made aware of," adds Nelson. "The information from this study, along with the excellent suggestions for design changes offered by farmers, have been passed along to the Alberta Agriculture Ag Tech Centre. They have an ongoing relationship with machinery manufacturers and will be working with the industry to see if modifications can be made to current designs so that future grain augers, and those presently being used, can be made safer and easier to operate. Collecting useful information from farmers and seeing it made available to machinery manufacturers, so that changes can be made, has been one of the major focuses of the Grain Auger Injury Study."

The other major focus of this study was education. In the last decade, 179 Albertans have lost their lives in farming accidents. Grain auger accidents accounted for five percent of these fatalities.

Many grain auger tragedies could be avoided if:

- grain augers were never operated without all the safety equipment in place
- grain augers were never operated by an inexperienced or fatigued person
- grain augers were never operated by a person who was careless or inattentive

"Making as many farmers as possible aware of these facts is the educational goal of our project," says Nelson.

If you have any comments or suggestions, please call (403) 752-4585 or fax (403) 752-3643

*Contact: Laura Nelson*
*(403) 752-4585*

## $25,000 AVAC investment helps new Alberta fruit products

A $25,000 investment under the Idea Builder program was announced by AVAC Ltd. on January 29, 2002. Idea Builder was launched in June 2001 to provide matching project capital for smaller, early stage projects that add value to agricultural commodities. The successful applicant was Orchard Mist Products Ltd., an Alberta fruit beverage company.

"AVAC's investment will enable us to develop new product lines using Alberta fruit and fruit juices," comments Dave Letkeman, Orchard Mist Products Ltd. sales manager.

One product line, Ice Blast™, is a type of frozen dessert. "We have developed a nutritious type of Freeze that kids enjoy and mom's approve of," says Letkeman. Ice Blast™ products contain real fruit juices. It is expected that Orchard Mist will launch Ice Blast™ products in spring 2002.

Product experimentation with Alberta saskatoons, black currants and strawberries will begin immediately. Orchard Mist will work with the Food Processing Development Centre at Leduc for product testing, sampling and nutritional charting.

"Orchard Mist has the potential to succeed in Alberta's fruit beverage industry," comments Joyce Lencucha, new venture development officer for AVAC Ltd. "Ice Blast™ products are great examples of what we call agrivalue - adding value to basic agricultural commodities."

Orchard Mist recently acquired a 12,000 square foot former dairy facility in Medicine Hat where the Company will produce, pasteurize and package its products. The pasteurizing process uses a combination of heat and time to kill all harmful bacteria, making it safer for human consumption. Fruit juices are quite susceptible to bacterial contamination; and although pasteurization is not required in Canada, the company believes it is an important safety measure for consumers.

Orchard Mist has been developing and testing their juice product line for two years - Orchard Mist Cider Products, a soft apple cider concentrate. Cider Products are packaged in 20 mL tubes. Each tube requires 9oz. of hot or cold water for an individual serving. "It became obvious during our market research, that consumers would be interested in other fruit flavoured apple ciders," says Letkeman. Nearly two years later, Orchard Mist Cider Products are available in original apple flavour, as well as cranberry, raspberry, blueberry and honey lemon. All Cider Products are made with an apple cider base and real fruit flavours.

A distribution agreement with Alberta Sunflower Seeds will ensure that Orchard Mist products will be distributed throughout Canada and into the United States.

"AVAC's Idea Builder program provides streamlined access to seed capital for early stage, smaller projects that add value to agricultural commodities," says Lencucha. "Projects may include ideas such as new food and health products, marketing innovations and breakthroughs in food processing technologies."

AVAC invests in innovative ideas that add value to agricultural commodities. We invest through coaching, knowledge, contacts and financial resources. AVAC's mission is help link knowledge and investment with science and enterprise to expand Alberta's value-added agricultural industry to $20 billion by 2010. Created in 1997, AVAC has already committed over $13 million to agrivalue initiatives.

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# Managing risk - insurance for agri-business

For agri-preneurs who are farm direct marketing or operating agri-tourism ventures, managing risk is a key factor in protecting both you and your business. Insurance is a cost of doing business and adequate coverage is essential to the long-term success of your business.

"Knowing what your risks are helps you evaluate what type and how much insurance you need," says Linda Hawk, rural development specialist-business with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Medicine Hat. "Pure risk involves the chance of a loss - the occurrence of which can neither be controlled nor predicted. Three types of pure risk are personal risks, property risks, and public risks."

### Personal Risks

This includes events that involve you, your spouse, your family or a business partner. Injury disability and death are examples. Ask yourself who depends on the income from your business, how they will be affected if you aren't able to operate the business, how much money is required to cover your debts and provide for your dependents, and how the death or disability of a business partner would affect you and your business.

### Property Risks

Damage to or loss of physical items owned, leased, or contracted by your business are examples of property risk. Consider the value of the property or equipment that you own, rent or lease and whether the loss of an item would impair your business operations.

### Public Risks

Public risks involve injury to another person or damage to another person's property during the course of your daily activities. Business owners should ask themselves whether or not anyone will be visiting the place of business and if there is coverage for a lawsuit or medical bills if customers, suppliers or employees are injured at your place of business.

"Liability issues resulting in lawsuits are becoming more common," adds Hawk. "It is important that you seek legal advice about the potential liability issues surrounding your business in addition to the advice you've already received from an insurance carrier. Be candid with both the lawyer and the insurance carrier about the business and the possible hazards that customers face."

If you belong to an industry association, such as the Alberta Farmers' Market Association (AFMA), you may be eligible to take part in a group insurance policy. Such a policy is set up to cover a number of situations, but you still need to be certain that your own business has adequate coverage.

"Remember that the purpose of insurance is protection," says Hawk. "The direct marketer or agri-tourism operator who can least afford insurance is usually the one who needs it the most. If you can't afford to pay the premiums, then you probably can't afford the cost of a loss. The greater the risk and the probability that the risk will occur, the greater the need for insurance protection."

*Contact:* *Linda Hawk*
*(403) 529-3616*

# Thinking ahead for pasture this year

The dry conditions for most of last growing season are catching up with some people. Pasture was scarce so they had to use hay fields for grazing. Hay production was down because there was not enough moisture early in the season and their acreage of hay was down because they used some of the land for pasture. They put some of their cereal crop into green feed or silage so they did not have their normal cash crop.

"This may sound worse than the situation most farmers are in but it is an illustration of how problems can multiply," says Ron Hockridge, crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "It is also easy to build a case to show that one year of drought will have an effect on several years of farming operations."

Many pastures were overgrazed last summer. As a result, we can expect to see them get off to a slow start this year - even if we end up with decent spring moisture. To compensate for the lack of early season pasture, farmers will have to have some type of emergency forage plan.

Planting fall cereals will often get people out of this situation. However, soil moisture conditions this fall did not allow good germination. Plants were small going into winter and there is little snow cover so we should expect higher than normal winter kill. It is best to avoid making hasty decisions in the spring though. Winter cereals often do fill in considerably once they start growing. If you are planning to use the cereal for pasture, you do not have to consider if the crop had enough vernalization. It is the vegetative growth you need.

Although winter cereals need some moisture to germinate, they can get going on less moisture than spring varieties. They can be seeded in the spring but do not expect to see many heads in the first summer. A winter crop or a mixture of winter and spring cereals will provide some silage and some grazing. That will take some of the pressure off perennial pastures and hay fields.

*Cont'd on page 5*

Cereals will provide emergency forage for grazing or green feed. Long term solutions for an adequate forage supply will require reseeding perennial forages. Under dry conditions it will be hard to get back to normal. It will be necessary to guess how much land will be needed for emergency forage for more than one year.

Weather conditions like those we have had for the last while raise some interesting ideas for farm planning. Would it be wise to plan to have a portion of the farm in annual forages each year? It will be more expensive and less flexible than keeping soil under permanent forage cover for several years. It does give some management alternatives that will help farmers avoid overgrazing their pastures in dry years.

*Contact:* *Ron Hockridge*
*(780) 361-1240*

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# Agri-News Briefs

## Strathcona Country Classic

Planning is underway for the sixth annual Strathcona Country Classic, being held on May 24 to 27, 2002. This youth agricultural show is a function of the Josephburg Agricultural Society. All Strathcona County 4-H beef, horse, sheep and multi clubs are involved in hosting this event and classes are open to all youth. The event starts Friday evening with a family banquet and dance in the Moyer Recreation Centre in Josephburg. Events over the weekend include a sheep and goat show, a gymkhana, a miniature horse show, dog obedience exhibits, llama and alpaca shows, a horse show and an open beef show. May 27 is the Fort Saskatchewan 4-H Beef Club achievement day show and sale. For more information, contact any of the committee members:

- Alpaca - Gary & Stella Beniuk, phone/fax (780) 922-2987
- Beef / Set-up - Lorne & Flossie Bodell, (780) 467-2726; fax (780) 449-6561
- Beef / Treasurer - Margo Mohr, (780) 998-5143; fax (780) 992-0161
- Beef / Vice-Chair - Wendy Schneider, (780) 998-3807; fax (780) 998-4199; e-mail <nlangus@telusplanet.net>
- Beef - Kris Wilson, (780) 922-4083
- 4-H Beef - Dianne Kuhn, phone/fax (780) 998-4715
- Canine / Chairman - Cliff & Carol Sime, (780) 467-6085 fax (780) 467-6390; e-mail <simefarm@hotmail.com>
- Gymkhana - Sharon Gabert, phone/fax (780) 998-1963
- Horse Show - Doug & Jacquie Fenske, (780) 998-1259; fax (780) 465-7667
- Llama - Ivy Duffy, (780) 662-4989; fax (780) 662-4996; e-mail <nduffy@telusplanet.net>
- Miniature horses - Sonja Marinoske, phone/fax (780) 922-3179; e-mail <minirose@telusplanet.net >
- Sheep & Goats / Secretary - Linda Walton-Pluim, phone/fax (780) 998-2955; e-mail <hobbyfm@attcanada.ca>
- Silent Auction - Donna Smith, (780) 998-9974

For further information, contact Linda Walton-Pluim at (780) 998-2955.

## Conference for women entrepreneurs

The theme is IMPACT! At the Pan West Conference for Women Entrepreneurs being held at the Westin Hotel in Calgary on April 24 to 26, 2002. Alberta Women's Enterprise Initiative Association (AWEIA) is hosting workshop sessions, keynote speakers, and innovative learning and networking opportunities, all designed to help women create IMPACT! in their business and life. The conference provides a forum where women can gain valuable ideas. The keynote address is by Debbie Travis of The Painted House, presenting information on The Meaning of Competitive Intelligence and Strategic Selling. Other sessions include: Interactive Marketing Critique; Be Your Own Coach; Financial Management - The Big Picture. The conference is designed to deliver focus, clarity, and steps for action in business. Cost of the three-day conference is $240 if registered before March 1, 2002. After March 1 the registration fee is $285. For further information, contact AWEIA toll free at 1-800-713-3558 or by e-mail <info@aweia.ab.ca>. Information is also available on the AWEIA web site <www.aweia.ab.ca>. AWEIA is a non-profit organization helping Alberta women advance in business. The Pan West Conference is sponsored by Western Economic Diversification and corporate sponsors.

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# Agri-News

March 4, 2002

## Winter tetany in beef cows

Winter tetany is a metabolic disease caused by lower than average blood magnesium levels. It is often seen in cows in late pregnancy or after calving. Often the first sign of this disease in a beef herd is a dead cow with marks of struggling or paddling on the ground around her head and legs.

"Cows that have this condition are often excitable, uncoordinated, trembling or staggering," says Tennis Marx, beef specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Camrose. "Occasionally, affected cows exhibit symptoms similar to symptoms associated with milk fever. Cows will usually be down, very quiet and unable to get up. These are sometimes referred to as 'downer cows' by farmers. Producers should **contact their veterinarian immediately** if their cattle show any of these symptoms. Treatment includes intravenous or subcutaneous administration of solutions containing magnesium and/or calcium salts."

Winter tetany in Alberta is often associated with feeding grain, straw or greenfeed-based rations. Cereal feeds are low or borderline in magnesium compared to a cow's requirements. Also, high levels of potassium in these feeds can reduce the amount of magnesium that is absorbed from the ration. High levels of potassium in feeds can be caused by fertilizing crops with high levels of nitrogen and potassium, or by repeated or high levels of manure application to soils. Dry growing conditions and acidic soils are two additional factors that can contribute to the accumulation of potassium in cereal feeds.

"Absorption of magnesium is dependent on the magnesium status of the animal varying from 25 to 75 per cent of dietary intake," adds Marx. "Absorption of magnesium is influenced by the amount of calcium, phosphorus and potassium in the diet. High dietary potassium or sodium sulphate or phosphorous reduces absorption of magnesium. Cows depend on a frequent supply of magnesium from the digestive tract to maintain normal blood magnesium concentrations."

**Prevention** of this disease is possible through supplementation of the ration with magnesium oxide and limestone. Limestone is a source of calcium that is often deficient in cereal based rations as well. Supplementation programs should be designed to provide approximately 40 grams of magnesium oxide and 80 grams of limestone per cow per day. Greater amounts may be required if the potassium level is extremely high. **Magnesium oxide is very unpalatable and should be mixed with grain or screenings-based supplements, or with silage, to achieve this level of intake**. Producers should work with a

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## This Week

March is National Nutrition Month

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nutritionist from a feed company to design a program that fits with their management system. The goal should be to **reduce the K/(Ca + Mg) ratio to less than 2.2** and to get the **Ca to P ratio to greater than 2.0** in the total ration. The Dietary Cation-Anion Balance (DCAB) calculation can be used as a guideline as well. Cereal-based rations also require supplementation of salt, trace minerals and vitamins and, if a lot of straw is used, protein.

The following table is general guideline for creating mixes that provide supplemental magnesium and calcium for beef cows:

| | Feeding Rate of Grain Based Mix (kg/cow/day) | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| Amount of Mineral Supplement to add to 1000 kg of grain mix | | | |
| Magnesium Oxide (kg) | 26 | 14 | 8 |
| Limestone (kg) | 48 | 34 | 18 |

*Contact:* *Tennis Marx*
*(780) 679-1352*
*<tennis.marx@gov.ab.ca>*

# Micronutrient research on field peas

Despite dry conditions on the prairies in 2001, growers continue to push the yield barrier, higher, for field peas. Yields of 60, 70 and as high as 90 bushels/acre were reported this past growing season. However, producers continue to ask what is limiting them from producing 100 bushels/acre or more. In France, the second largest producer of field peas in the world, yields in the 100 to 125 bushels/acre range are not uncommon, with an average of 75 bushels/acre over the last 10 years. The Canadian average for the same time frame in comparison is only 32 bushels/acre. Part of the reason for this yield difference may be better plant genetics, but fertility may be a factor, also. A field pea crop with optimum phosphorous, potassium, and sulphur levels, that is properly inoculated, may be putting pressure on available micronutrients in the soil.

"This past summer, a micronutrient trial looking at both soil and foliar application methods, and eight micronutrient treatments was conducted at Carstairs and Ohaton (Camrose)," says Mark Olson, pulse and special crops specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Lacombe. "There were two varieties of field pea, Espace and Integra, an untreated check with seven micronutrients or combinations of; boron, copper, iron, manganese, zinc, molybdenum and a complete micro mix. The plots were fertilized with 11-40-0-10 at 70 lbs/acre of product with the seed to meet fertility requirements. Additionally, granular inoculant was applied with the seed at 10 lbs per acre."

At the Carstairs site, the soil analysis report indicated that the levels of iron, copper, zinc and boron were bordering on the deficiency range. At the Ohaton site, the soil analysis report indicated that the levels of iron, zinc, boron and manganese were bordering on deficiency range. The copper level at Ohaton was in the deficient range.

As in previous greenhouse studies on micronutrients where yield and visual responses to manganese and molybdenum were noted, response to these micronutrients might again be expected.

"The results for the first year of this three year study, at Carstairs and Ohaton, are inconclusive," continues Olson. "Preliminary findings indicate there was no positive yield response from micronutrient applications, either soil or foliar, over and above the untreated (check) for either Espace or Integra. However, this was only one growing season, and a dry one at that, at two locations. There have been similar findings on yield, by *Lopetinsky et al.*, in the northern part of Alberta over the last three years."

Looking at protein, there was no statistical difference between the untreated (check) and the micronutrient treatments, either soil or foliar, over and above the untreated (check) for either Espace or Integra. Overall, the yellow variety Integra has a higher protein content compared to the green variety Espace and this trend is observed at both Carstairs (26.3 per cent versus 24.8 per cent foliar applied treatment; 26.3 per cent versus 24.9 per cent soil applied treatment) and Ohaton (27.3 per cent versus 26.8 per cent foliar applied treatment; 27.3 per cent versus 26.9 per cent).

In analyzing 1000 kwt or seed weight, there were significant differences between treatments, however, only at the Ohaton site was there a response over and above the untreated (check). The complete mixture applied foliar on the variety Espace had a higher 1000 kwt than the untreated (check) and iron plots, but was similar to all other micronutrient applications. When the sites, varieties and applications methods were combined no further statistical difference could be found between treatments for 1000 kwt.

"Further micronutrient fertility research over a number of sites and years is required to assess the true impact on pea yield, protein, and all plant characteristics," says Olson. 'Farmers should not rule out the possibility of a micronutrient response without applying check strips. Soils that are coarse textured (sandy, sandy loam) and high in pH should be analyzed for micronutrient levels."

For a copy of the full first year report on micronutrients effects on field pea contact Mark Olson at (403) 782-3301.

*Contact:* *Mark Olson*
*(403) 782-3301*

*Cont'd on page 3*

## Monitoring helps agricultural industry protect water quality

Water quality is a priority for Alberta's agricultural industry. A provincial monitoring program is one of the many efforts in Alberta to help farmers and ranchers better protect water quality. An information package highlighting the results of the 2000 monitoring program, was released in February 2002.

The Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture (AESA) Program has established a long-term water quality monitoring network of streams draining 23 small agricultural watersheds. This program, called the AESA Stream Survey, is tracking trends in water quality over time as the agriculture industry grows and more environmentally sustainable practices are adopted.

"Anything that happens on land - agriculture, forestry, and urbanization - can affect water quality," says James Wuite, a water quality biologist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Agriculture is doing its part to protect water quality. The AESA Stream Survey will help farmers and ranchers gauge whether they are maintaining or improving water quality in the agricultural areas of the province."

Each year, a Provincial Overview will be issued to summarize the program's findings for the previous year. In addition, water quality information for each of the 23 watersheds will be summarized in the annual Watershed Reports. There is also a series of factsheets and a brochure that outlines background information about the program available at all Alberta Agriculture regional offices.

The AESA Stream Survey monitors water quality by collecting stream samples that are analyzed for nutrients, such as phosphorus and nitrogen; bacteria such as E. coli and fecal coliforms; and, 40 pesticides, mostly herbicides. Samples are taken from March to October during high and low stream flows. Since water quality data tend to vary from year-to-year due to climatic variability, the purpose of this program is to monitor water quality over the long-term. "This long-term approach reflects the commitment of the agriculture industry to improve surface water quality in Alberta," says Wuite.

The data obtained so far is preliminary and doesn't yet provide enough information to establish trend lines. However, over the next few years of annual measuring, this information will allow the establishment of benchmarks that will enable the industry to chart progress.

The AESA Stream Survey is sponsored and managed by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development; Alberta Environment; Alberta Health and Wellness; and, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration.

Other efforts to protect water quality in agricultural areas in Alberta include on-farm demonstration projects, publications and web documents on beneficial management practices (BMPs), and applied research on practices and standards. These efforts involve partnerships with agricultural commodity groups, municipalities, environmental agencies and others.

For a copy of the 2000 Information Package, contact the regional conservation coordinator at regional offices of Alberta Agriculture.

For further information on the AESA Stream Survey, contact James Wuite at (780) 427-3747.

*Contact: James Wuite*
*(780) 427-3747*

## Alberta egg producers address organics

Though organic eggs make up about only four per cent of all shell eggs sold in Canadian grocery stores, consumers are becoming more interested in organic eggs, especially those produced locally.

The Alberta Egg Producers Board, recognizing this small, yet growing market for Alberta-produced organic eggs, has begun proactively dealing with this issue. It has set up an Organic Review Committee, that held its first meeting in February 2002. The Committee will work to develop a pilot project that helps organic egg producers enter Alberta's egg production system.

"The Alberta Egg Producers Board has demonstrated its commitment to satisfying all categories of egg producers by striking this Organic Review Committee," says Mike Dolinski, organic specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Devlopment, Edmonton. "Its involvement ensures the same high standards of on-farm egg production so that consumers, whether they choose to buy organic or conventional, can feel confident that they are getting safe, fresh, quality eggs."

"The key will be to come up with a workable plan that has some flexibility to recognize unique issues and factors facing new organic producers, yet remains fair to existing egg producers producing conventional, organic and other specialty eggs," says Ron Hamilton, organic egg producer in the Armena area. "It should be a 'hand up', not a 'hand out' program."

The Committee is actively seeking input from the many various stakeholders, including Alberta Agriculture, as well as organic egg producers in the province to help them develop this program. The next step is to integrate the ideas generated from meeting discussions into the parameters of the pilot project.

"It is important to note that the word 'organic' refers to the manner by which the eggs are produced. Conventionally produced and organic eggs are comparable in health and nutritional attributes," says Jane Carlyle, professional home economist and coordinator of the Alberta Food Safety Info Line.

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*Marketing, communications manager*
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*Cont'd on page 4*

## Identity preservation becoming more important

There is no doubt that identity preservation (IP) is going to be an important concept for marketing in the future. Customers are getting more selective on what they are willing to buy and they are willing to pay a premium to get what they want. The challenge to the industry is to get a system in place to meet these requirements.

"According to a panel of international speakers at Agritech 2002, some of the problems in establishing a workable system are minor," says Ron Hockridge, crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "Small amounts of CPS wheat in a shipment of hard red spring wheat, for example, only dilutes the quality of the shipment. Larger quantities will reduce grades, but will not normally result in refusal of the whole load. However, other contamination problems can be very serious. Since several countries do not want GMO's, even a small amount over the allowable limits may result in shipments being turned back at the purchaser's port. Also, there are specific insects and diseases that would be refused by individual countries. These different levels of accept-ance will dictate different levels of control that will be needed in the handling and transportation systems."

What seems like a minor glitch to one person is often a major irritant to someone else. One farmer from southern Alberta feels that the lack of identity preservation in some commodities is hurting his bottom line significantly right now. He grows winter wheat and, for many years, sold it right off the combine. There was very little other grain in the system at that time, so it wasn't hard to mix lots yet keep them separate from other types of grain. Now, if winter wheat doesn't go into the system at the time of delivery, this farmer has problems. He suspects there is little enough winter grain at some locations to cause his grain to be mixed with spring varieties. It is not an objectionable contaminant, but it means getting a Number 3, or feed quality, on the spring grades rather than the Number 1 winter wheat the producer expected.

"People have identified several ways that identity can be preserved, but most of them have their drawbacks," adds Hockridge. "Farmers who buy abandoned elevators can restrict the grain coming into them, but they may already be contamin-ated and hard to clean up. Producer cars could be separate as long as they are kept separate at delivery, but there is a concern over grading each car. Newer elevators will work as long as they have separate bins for each product. Some producers are even thinking of forming a co-operative and having several bins at a producer car loading area, but there is a question of when a facility becomes an elevator, and then there may be regulations and expenses involved."

Organic farmers have been dealing with identity preservation for years. They have dealt with lack of storage capacity near markets, the resulting short timelines to get product from farm to market. It has been an obstacle to the growth of their industry.

"No doubt, developing infrastructure to handle identity preservation will go through some growing pains," says Hockridge. "Ultimately a workable system will develop. If customers are truly willing to pay extra for the products they want, the producers will need a workable system in place that guarantees product identification. IP is something that all producers will be dealing with in the very near future."

*Contact: Ron Hockridge*
*(780) 361-1240*

## B.C. farm direct marketer speaking in Alberta

It's not possible to be an expert at everything. Setting up networks with like-minded people can creat a great business advantage and help a business develop that 'slight edge'.

"The provincial farm direct marketing networking group is inviting Albertans to a few hours with Cloverdale Produce Farms to hear their farm direct marketing success story," says Kerry Engel, rural development specialist-business with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Westlock. "Third generation Surrey B.C. farmer, Jyl Singh will discuss how she and her husband responded to change in the agriculture industry and transformed the family farm operation, Cloverdale Produce Farms Ltd., into an award-winning farm country market specializing in growing and marketing fresh-picked fruits and vegetables direct to the customer. This will also be an opportunity to learn how farm direct marketing associations work; the value of networking; and, how this type of marketing can benefit an agriculture business."

Besides the Farm Market, the Singh's have a Pumpkin Patch, seven-acre Corn Maze and a Kid's Corral Animal center. They offer a variety of school tours, including one that features the greenhouse, maze and pumpkin patch. The farm also hosts a variety of workshops and hayrides. Cloverdale Produce Farms received the 2000 Ag Aware B.C. Farm of the Year Award.

"We aim to provide a tour of the living countryside in a most enjoyable and informative way," says Singh. "We are a third generation family farm dedicated to high standards of food safety, food production and farm education."

Singh will be speaking on three separate dates and locations throughout Alberta in March 2002. The registration fee for all locations is $10.00 per farm unit (includes GST and refreshment break). Please make cheques payable to the County of Westlock ASB.

Registration deadline for all locations is Friday March 8, 2002. Locations include:

- **Camrose** March 12, 2002 10 am - Noon
  Agriculture Conference Room, 5015 - 50 Ave (2nd floor)
  To register: Call Marian Williams at (780) 679-1210

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- **Westlock** March 13, 2002 1pm - 3 pm
  Westlock Provincial Building Conference Room,
  10003 - 100 St.
  To register: Call Kerry Engel at (780) 349-4465
- **Airdrie** March 14, 2002 1pm - 3pm
  Airdrie Agriculture Centre, 917 Irricana Road (HWY 567)
  To register: Call Maxine Hutt at (403) 948-8503

This program is being organized by Alberta Agriculture's Business Specialists and sponsored by the Agricultural Business Management Branch, to link you to the programs and resources relevant to the development of your business.

*Contact: Kerry Engel*
*(780) 349-4465*

# Agri-News Briefs

## Grasshopper forecast map is on-line

The 2002 grasshopper forecast map provides a good visual representation of the grasshopper pressure facing farmers in western Canada. Alberta is particularly threatened with increasing grasshopper populations, up 20 to 50 per cent from last year. Some areas of Alberta are not represented on the map, specifically northern Alberta including Manning, Paddle Prairie, High Level and Fort Vermilion. Farmers throughout the Alberta Peace are advised to be aware of the grasshopper threat, however, as reports of high grasshopper numbers were received last season. The grasshopper forecast map is generated from all of the fall grasshopper count data that was received from across the province. Efforts are being made to ensure that data is received from all areas next season. The 2002 grasshopper forecast map can be found at the following websites:

Dr. Dan Johnson, Agriculture Canada -
<http://res2.agr.ca/lethbridge/scitech/dlj/johnsond.htm#new>

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
<http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/pests/forecast/2002hopper_forecast.html>

For further information, contact Jim Calpas, provincial integrated pest management specialist, Alberta Agriculture, (780) 422-4911.

## ABC annual general meeting

The annual general meeting of the Alberta Bison Commission (ABC) is being held at the Grande Prairie Inn on March 8, 2002 at 1:00 p.m. Albertans involved in the bison industry are invited to attend the meeting and see what the Commission has accomplished over the past year. Plans for initiatives for 2002 will also be announced. For further information, contact Dean Andres, executive director of the ABC at (780) 986-4100.

## Pig production seminars

Seminars on ***Low Input (Natural & Organic) Pig Production*** are being held in Three Hills on April 4, 2002 and in Westlock on April 5, 2002. Each session runs from 1:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. The seminar is designed for Albertans who want to raise pigs using simple systems with low inputs. Topics under discussion will include: how to become an organic farmer; basic nutrition, what nutrients do pigs need; pasture pig production, both farrowing and finishing; straw-based systems; using existing facilities; managing pasture; economics; and, concerns with low input production. The main speaker is Bert Dening, pork specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Barrhead. There will also be speakers on pasture management principles and on organic farming. For further information or to register, contact Dening at (780) 674-8247.

## On-Farm Food Safety Program update

The Introductory On-Farm Food Safety Program Seminar (OFFSP) is being held from 9:00 a.m. until noon on April 2, 2002 at the Camrose Regional Exhibition during the Wild Rose Classic. Alberta producers are encouraged to attend this free seminar and manuals will be available. The OFFSP will be an important part of the criteria for the future Quality Assurance Program that will be implemented nationally. For further information, contact the Bison Centre of Excellence at (780) 986-4100.

## Upcoming Ag-related events

- Edmonton Home & Garden Show - March 21 to 24, 2002
- Edmonton Farm & Ranch Show - March 27 to 30, 2002
- Alberta Restaurant and Food Service Association Exhibition - ARFEX 2002

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# Agri-News

March 11, 2002

## Alberta Agriculture regional office structure changing

Restructuring of the Industry Development Sector to better meet the needs of Alberta's agriculture industry is "on target and on time," said Brian Rhiness, Assistant Deputy Minister of the Industry Development Sector.

"It's been three years in the making but we're close to completion," said Rhiness. "We expect to wrap up decisions on the design of our delivery system by the end of March 2002. At the same time we're making decisions on how best to staff our programs and services to provide optimum benefit for our clients."

These changes are a direct result of the Ag Summit, which brought together producers, processors and other interested parties to discuss the future of rural Alberta and the agriculture industry. "Through the Ag Summit process, farmers told us they wanted a different level of service and needed different information if they were to be successful," said Rhiness. "They wanted information like how to market their products, how to be more innovative and how to be successful in a global market." Rhiness said that this information was the foundation that the restructured sector was built on.

"Instead of having Regional Advisory Services and three line divisions – Animal, Plant and Processing, the new Sector will have six divisions devoted to providing the information and services that producers and processors demanded," said Rhiness. These divisions include Crop Diversification, Livestock Development, Ag-Entrepreneurship, Agri-Food Investment, Processing Development and Business and Innovation.

While the staffing process is still underway, the new directors and branch heads have been named and are already working on developing what the new divisions will offer to producers.

"Even though we are re-focusing what the Sector does, we are still committed to having specialists in rural Alberta," said Rhiness.

The structure of the new Industry Development Sector is based on hub offices. "We have identified 16 hub offices, located across rural Alberta," said Rhiness. "They will have a group of specialists working together and some locations will also have specialized infrastructure, such as research facilities." The hub offices are located across the province, including Stettler, the location of the new Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development call centre.

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## This Week

This is Farm Safety Week

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In addition to these offices, Industry Development Sector has identified a series of possible co-locations. These offices, located across Alberta, will have specialists located with other industry groups. "These locations allow us to increase our service without having a "bricks and mortar" office in the area. Even though we've identified these offices, we won't know exactly where they will be until after the staffing process is complete."

"The Ag-Info Call Centre will allow producers to talk to a real person right away, instead of having to wait to get the information," said Rhiness.

The centre will be staffed with resource agents – drawn from experienced Client Service Representatives from across Alberta – and crop, beef and forage specialists. The toll-free number for the Ag-Info Call Centre is 1-866-882-7677. "The call centre staff are all experienced at handling producer inquiries – from simple production problems to diagnosing complex agricultural issues. And if they don't know the answer, they will be able to direct the caller to any one of the specialists located across the province."

Alberta Agriculture's web site <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca>, will still provide producers and processors with extensive knowledge on a variety of subjects, as well as the opportunity to download forms and contact specialists and other Alberta Agriculture staff.

*Contact: Don Young*
*Strategic Change Chair*
*(780) 422-2522*

*Brian Rhiness*
*(780) 427-2442*

## Footprints abound!

***Livestock Handling Safety*** is the theme of Farm Safety Week this year. National Farm Safety Week runs from March 13 to 20, 2002.

"This year, Farm Safety Week across Canada salutes those farm people who handle livestock," says Eric Jones, farm safety specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Alberta's farmers pride themselves in the care they provide their livestock. Farm animals are such a part of rural living, that without them, the farm would not be the same."

Farmers are encouraged to take some time this week to think about safety and take an active roll in taking stock of their knowledge and expertise in livestock handling safety and health.

"The handling of livestock does not go without personal risk," adds Jones. "There isn't a day that goes by without someone putting themselves at risk, and handling livestock is no exception."

There are many different risks associated with livestock handling. Some of those risks include:

- respiratory problems
- physical injuries, such as crushing, cuts, punctures, broken limbs
- hearing loss
- transferable diseases
- eye-sight loss

"Income loss, injury to the livestock, equipment damage and downtime are risks that are seldom taken into account when estimating the costs of doing business," says Jones. "These are very real factors. Farmers need to consider all the various aspects of what an accident or injury could cost them and the business."

Risk is something we live with every day and the only one person who can manage it – is you!

*Contact: Eric Jones*
*(780) 427-4231*

## Taking stock

Every day, farmers head out the door in the morning to do chores. It's routine – a way of life on the farm, but once in a while, it's time to take stock!

"Livestock needs special care and many of the chores performed require contact with these animals," says Eric Jones, farm safety specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "statistics have indicated that chore times are one of the leading times during the day when safety precautions need to be taken."

The spring season is one of long hours for farmers. It's a time of the year when there are many things weighing on the minds of Alberta farmers – thoughts of machine repairs, inventory of seed and fertilizer, and decisions about what fields will be worked. Distractions while working with livestock can be very dangerous. The animals about to be fed or let out of a stall or barn need your full attention. Unfortunately, many accidents occur in that small moment when the mind wanders or complete attention isn't being paid.

To avoid these accidents, farmers should take a look at the following recommendations that have been expressed by other farmers around the province.

"What I do, is get as much rest as possible. I take a few minutes to read the paper and have that wake-up cup of coffee," says a farmer from Viking.

*Cont'd on page 3*

"I like to leave a note each day, to let my spouse know where I'm going to be. We have a white-board set up during busy seasons to mark down where we all are, because we run 100 head of cattle and farm a lot of leased land. It's hard to know where every one is working," says a farmer in High Prairie.

"Last week, I got up and went out to the barn to get some chop for the couple of sows I have. I forgot to put on the light, tripped and fell, and it took several minutes to find my glasses. When I did find them, they had been stepped on. I really felt foolish, but realized that the situation could have been much more serious," says a farmer from Willingdon.

"I was in the milk barn about 4:00 a.m., cleaning out the manure track when a cow stepped back on my foot. I didn't see it coming. I was wearing a pair of rubber boots and they just didn't provide enough protection. I got a pair of good protective boots for Easter last year, and wouldn't be without them," says a farmer from Camrose.

Most farmers can tell a safety-related story that occurred while doing chores. The thing farmers need to decide is what they are going to do to make every day safer – for them and their families.

Safety is an individual thing – it's up to you!

*Contact: Eric Jones*
*(780) 427-4231*

## Magnificent horses

Horses once thundered across the prairies with no riders or fence restrictions. While there aren't many wild herds left, these magnificent animals can still be seen grazing on pastureland throughout the province. Farmers tell many stories of the services and work horses have performed in the past.

"Horses continue to be a part of daily life in rural Alberta," says Eric Jones, farm safety specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "While this noble beast is a special working and recreational part of farm life, it is also the number one animal causing injury to farmers, farm managers, their family members and employees."

Increase in horse related injuries have grown to a staggering high over the last 10 years. For every 100 reported livestock injuries, over half can be attributed to horse handling. Riders falling off their horses lead the statistics in horse-related accidents resulting in injuries. This is closely followed by people being bitten and kicked.

"It's up to the people working with, riding and handling horses to reduce these horse-related accidents," says Jones.

A few helpful hints for horse handling include:

- approach the horse from the front if possible
- let the animal know you are near
- reach out slowly if you need to touch the horse
- wear proper protective gear
- if the horse is with her foal, giver her a wide berth
- when saddling a horse, take your time and let the animal see what you are about to do. The same applies when trying to mount

"The next time you work with a horse, stop and take a minute to admire this magnificent animal and remember that the next move is yours," adds Jones. "Then approach with perhaps a little more respect. Working safely around them will only add to the experience."

*Contact: Eric Jones*
*(780) 427-4231*

## Take charge of electrical safety

Electric power is a necessity for modern-day living, and farm yards are full of electrical wires, both overhead and underground, as well as in farm buildings. This electricity keeps the operation running smoothly. Power lines are specifically placed outside of normal human reach to keep people safe from the dangers of power line contact, but every year, injuries occur because of carelessness and inattention.

Between April 1, 2000 and March 31, 2001, the Safety Services Branch of Alberta Municipal Affairs received 452 reports of power line contacts. Forty-six of these were specifically related to farm implements contacting power lines. Many of the remaining contacts could also have been agriculture related because they involved brush and tree trimming, trucks with raised boxes, and equipment mounted on trucks or tractors.

"Electricity is often underestimated because it can't be seen," says Rene Leduc, chief electrical inspector at Alberta Municipal Affairs, Edmonton. "It poses a very real threat and should be treated with respect."

Just like people, animals need to be protected from electricity. In July 2000, a calf was electrocuted after contacting a power line downed by a windstorm. Ensure your farmyard is free of hazards, such as fallen power lines, damaged electric fences, and wiring inside of farm buildings. If you do find a hazard, contact your power company.

*Cont'd on page 4*

Follow these safety tips to protect your family and livestock from electrical injury:

- know where all the overhead power lines are before you begin any job
- keep an eye out for fallen wires and contact your power company about sagging or fallen wires, broken poles, and accidents or fires that affect power lines
- always lower high equipment, such as augers and grain truck boxes before moving them, and make sure you have enough clearance when moving farm equipment such as wing-type cultivators and air seeders
- never let anyone ride on top of farm equipment
- never stack hay or grain near power lines an avoid placing structures such as grain bins under or near power lines
- call your power company to trim branches or cut down trees near electrical wires
- be cautious when carrying and using ladders, grain probes, irrigation pipes, steel reinforcement bars and bin hoists
- ensure your electric fence controller is approved by a recognized testing agency. Homemade controllers are dangerous and should never be uses
- always call your power company for advice or assistance before you dig (in case of underground cables) or if you need help with power lines on your farm.

*Contact:* *Rene Leduc* *(780) 415-0481*

*Alison Gates-Kriston* *(780) 422-8814*

# Agri-News Briefs

## Livestock handling safety

- One in five hospitalized farm injuries are livestock-related
- following tractor and machinery incidents, livestock-handling is the next most common cause of death on Canadian farms
- people age 60 and older are at greatest risk of death due to animal-related incidents
- bull attacks account for 42 per cent of livestock-related fatalities, but only six per cent of hospitalized injuries on Canadian farms
- only about one in 20 victims survive a bull attack
- most bull attacks happen in stockyards or open fields – not in barns
- cows are involved in 33 per cent of animal-related injuries and 16 per cent of fatalities on Canadian farms
- most cow-related incidents involve the presence of a calf
- most victims of cow-related incidents are age 60 or older
- horses account for 40 per cent of livestock-related deaths and 46.5 per cent of hospitalized injuries
- most horse-related fatalities are caused by the victim being kicked by the horse

For more information, visit one of the following web sites:

- Canadian Federation of Agriculture – www.cfa-fca.ca
- Farm Credit Canada – www.fcc.fac.ca
- The Canadian Coalition for Agricultural Safety and Rural Health – www.ccasrh.org
- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada – www.agr.ca
- Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development – www.agric.gov.ab.ca (click on 'search' and type in farm safety)

## Handling cattle gates

Opening a gate - an easy enough thing to do and something that is usually done without even a thought. That could be just where the problem lies. Cattle gate injuries usually involve the head, arm, thigh, hand or leg, and often result in crushing, bruising, lacerations and broken bones. Getting hit with a cattle gate is, unfortunately, quite common. Cattle gate injuries usually occur because the person is:

- standing too close after opening the gate
- holding the gate open after opening it
- standing on the gate as it swings open
- standing behind the gate after opening it
- straining to open the gate and it springs suddenly once it's swinging freely
- straining to close the gate

Cattle gate injuries involve all age groups. Don't add to these statistics. Take a few extra moments and handle those gates safely. If you have a farm gate injury story, e-mail it to <eric.jones@agric.gov.ab.ca> and we'll share it on the Farm Safety web site.

*Cont'd on page 5*

# Agri-News Briefs

## Forage competition

All forage growers are invited to participate in the 16th Annual Alberta Dairy Congress Forage Competition. The top entries in eight hay and silage classes receive cash and prizes, and all first and second place winners (except in class 6) will receive a complimentary feed analysis. All entries must be from 2001 production on the farm of the exhibitor. There is no entry fee. Hay entries must be securely bound and tied in half-bale or larger in size, in a cardboard carton. Silage or haylage entries should be submitted in a suitable container (eg. ice cream bucket that is 2 kg or 5 lb). Hay, silage or haylage must be received by March 22, 2002 to permit analysis. Late entries will not be accepted. The winners will be announced at the Alberta Dairy Congress, being held in Leduc on June 5 to 7, 2002. For further information, contact the Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development Leduc office at (780) 986-8985.

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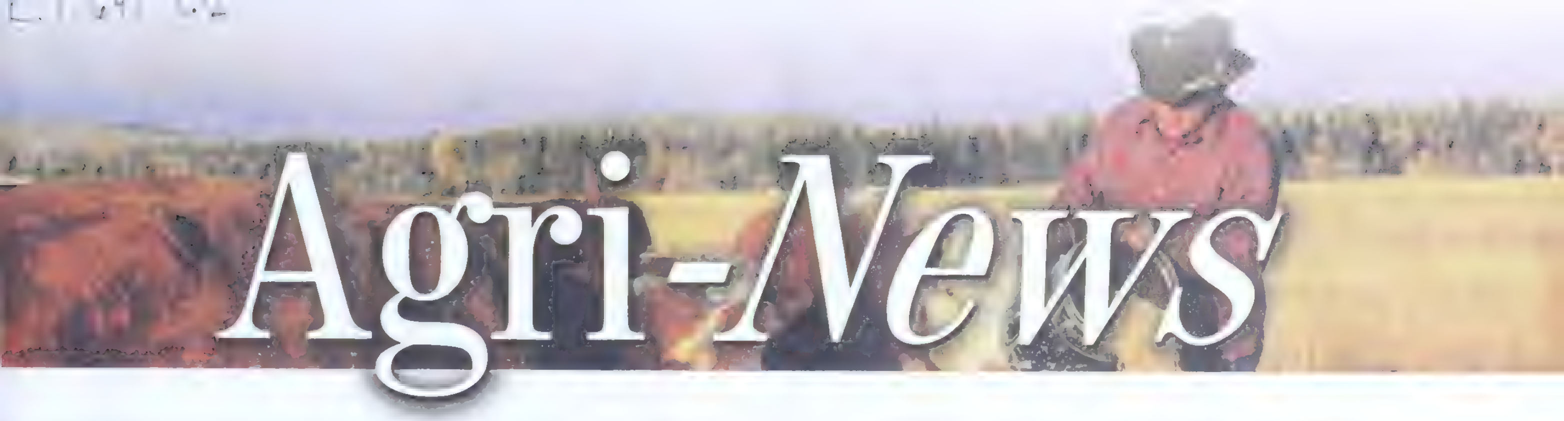

# Agri-News

March 18, 2002

## Protecting the Alberta Advantage in the agriculture industry

***A message from the Minister***

It's been almost a year since I was given the honour of representing the most important industry in Alberta. When I began my term as Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, I entered a period where our industry was being faced with many challenges such as foot and mouth disease, severe drought and falling grain prices.

> *"The Government of Alberta is committed to the prosperity and sustainability of our agriculture industry and will work with Albertans in 2002 to protect our Alberta Advantage and ensure agriculture continues to grow."*
>
> *Shirley McClellan*
> Deputy Premier and Minister of
> Agriculture, Food and Rural Development

Fortunately, thanks to the vigilance and hard work of industry and government, we kept our country free of foot and mouth disease. Hard work and smart business decisions on the part of our industry also helped them get through another harsh year of drought. It was a tough year for agriculture, but our industry showed its true grit and came out strong with record numbers in farm cash receipts, food and beverage manufacturing and exports.

The agriculture and agri-food industry in Alberta is a vital component in our economy and our rural landscape. Last year, our primary and value-added sectors contributed a record $8.3 billion and $10 billion respectively to the provincial economy. Industry's long-term vision is "twenty-ten by 2010" - $20 billion in value-added activity and $10 billion in primary production by 2010, and we are well on our way to reaching this goal.

2002 will be a year of opportunity for our industry, and of change, and your government is responding to this new reality.

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**Internet site: www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agrinews Editor e-mail: agrinews@gov.ab.ca**

Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

We have reorganized our industry development sector to better serve the needs of our industry, focusing more on the business needs of agriculture and ways to help industry and producers become more profitable.

I am also pleased with the renewed emphasis we are placing on rural development to complement our goal of strengthening rural communities. The new Rural Development Initiatives office will play a key role in the evolution of a rural development strategy for the province.

Although we were unable to continue the 30 per cent discount on crop insurance, we are continuing to enhance our crop insurance program to better meet the needs of farmers. And we will also help protect agricultural communities through the implementation of the Agriculture Drought Risk Management Plan, which will allow for a more timely and accurate assessment of drought impacts on the farm economy and more targeted, timely, and cost-effective response measures if needed. I hope producers were able to take advantage of the Alberta Farm Water Program to secure long-term water supplies for their farms. The deadline for project completion is March 31, 2002 and applications for completed projects must be received by May 31, 2002.

Food safety is a high priority for the Albertans. In this regard, our industry has definitely been setting the pace. We will continue to work closely with commodity groups on initiatives such as Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) training, and we will help to implement and support on-farm food safety programs. This industry partnership means high-quality, safe food for domestic and export markets.

And we are always planning for a strong tomorrow. Initiatives such as the multi-year Ag Summit consultation process on the long-term viability and sustainability of the agriculture sector will wrap up in 2002-03, when 12 industry-led action teams will submit reports.

As well, Canadian and provincial governments are developing a new Agriculture Policy Framework, a five-year strategy encompassing food safety, environment, renewal, science and risk management. You can be assured that we are working very hard to ensure that Alberta's interests are reflected and protected as this new framework is developed.

The Government of Alberta is committed to the prosperity and sustainability of our agriculture industry and will work with Albertans in 2002 to protect our Alberta Advantage and ensure agriculture continues to grow.

*Contact:* *Terry Willock, communications director*
*Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development*
*(780) 422-7099*

## 2002 insect pest outlook for Alberta

As the 2002 crop year approaches it is time to consider the insect pest outlook for the province. Insect pests are a normal component of agricultural production, but when there are outbreak situations it is possible to lose perspective and concentrate on the outbreak rather than on crop production in face of outbreaks.

"The **grasshopper** forecast for 2002 has received a lot of attention from the media, to the point where some people are worried if there is anything that can be done to protect crops and farming livelihoods," says Jim Calpas, provincial integrated pest management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "The grasshopper is a media favorite as the size and nature of this pest tends to produce a lot of disturbing images that even people in cities can relate to. Large numbers of grasshoppers crawling across the land and flying up onto people walking through infested fields. This is enough to make the average person's skin crawl, let alone the person in the field. Some travelers were even concerned about being stranded in grasshopper outbreak areas. An overheated car caused by a radiator plugged full of dead hoppers, with a windshield completely smeared with more hoppers.

"It is important to remember that the Alberta farming community has faced grasshopper outbreaks in the past and will again in future. The reality is that outbreaks are part of the overall natural cycle and the storm will have to be weathered. The focus must be on managing the pest problem to the best of our ability and remembering that agriculture is about growing crops and raising livestock, not about killing pests. Pests can be managed, but some pests can be more difficult to manage, some years can bring severe losses in spite of our best efforts."

Pest management is risk management, and the key to making sound risk management decisions is to be as informed as possible about the nature of the risk. A sound pest management program is always a cost effective component of agriculture production. Always consult the latest technical information before implementing control recommendations to ensure that any control measures are based on the pest economic thresholds.

"There are a number of pests in addition to grasshoppers that should be considered for the upcoming season," says Calpas.

**Lygus bug** populations in canola were building in a number of areas throughout the province last summer. Indications are that this pest could be a serious concern in some areas in Alberta. Westlock, Thorhild, Smoky Lake, Bonnyville, St. Paul down to Vermilion and Vegreville all saw fairly high Lygus populations during podding last year. Vulcan, Strathmore and Three Hills saw high numbers as well. The Peace Region is also advised to be on the lookout for Lygus. Growers are advised to monitor their canola fields at the bolting stage to determine the potential

*Cont'd on page 3*

for an outbreak. High numbers at bolting usually indicate high numbers throughout the entire season. The fields should be monitored throughout the season as high populations can develop even if low numbers were found at bolting. Lygus bugs can move into a field as the season progresses. The economic threshold for Lygus is an average of 1.5 bugs per sweep based on 10 sets of 10 sweeps taken from throughout the field. Control is applied when the threshold is reached in the bloom stage.

**Cabbage seedpod weevil** continues to be a concern as the insect moves further north. All canola south of a line drawn east to west across the province and passing through Lacombe, is at risk. The economic threshold is three weevils per sweep based on 10 sets of 10 sweeps taken from throughout the field at the bud stage through early flowering. Monitoring for cabbage seedpod weevil and Lygus can be done at the same time using the same sweeps.

**Flea beetles** were a concern for canola growers in the south last year, with virtually all irrigated canola under high flea beetle pressure. A very good rule is 'if you had a flea beetle problem last year, you're going to have one again this year'. Growers who experienced high flea beetle problems last year should be strongly considering a dual-purpose seed treatment or paying very close attention to their fields in spring. The economic threshold for flea beetles is 50 per cent defoliation of the canola seedlings. In order to prevent the loss associated with the defoliation, insecticide sprays should be applied at 40 per cent. "In seedlings, considerable defoliation due to flea beetles can occur in a short period of time. Waiting until the 50 per cent target is reached usually relates to a 65 per cent defoliation before the chemical is actually applied," adds Calpas.

There were strong indicators in 2001 that bertha armyworms could be beginning another outbreak cycle. This is not necessarily a cause for immediate alarm for Alberta farmers in 2002, but it is a testimony to the success of Alberta's monitoring programs. The patterns of the bertha armyworm population upsurges in 2001 were very similar to the patterns just before the last outbreak cycle in 1995 and '96. The only areas in Alberta that may see some problems with bertha armyworms in 2002 are in and around Cochrane, Three Hills, Airdrie, Strathmore, Okotoks and Vulcan. The economic thresholds for bertha armyworm are calculated based on the estimated yield of the crop and cost of the chemical application There is a bertha armyworm threshold calculator on Alberta Agriculture's internet web site.

**Diamondback moth** could also be a problem this year. "This will depend on how early in the season the moths from Florida and Texas make it up to Canada," says Calpas. "The province monitors for the arrival of the diamondback moth in a cooperative effort under the Tri-Provincial Insect Monitoring Program. Farmers will be advised if it looks like diamondback moth will be a problem again this year."

Even though there is not a lot we can do about them, it bears mentioning that **cabbage maggot** can cause considerable loss in canola, up to $1 million province-wide in a good canola year.

The **wheat midge** continues to be a concern for farmers in a broad band from Bonnyville, Lloydminster and Provost extending west into the province to Barrhead, Sangudo, Stony Plain, Leduc and Red Deer. There is a particular hotspot in an area bounded by Camrose, Daysland and Ryley. This pest is still relatively new for most growers and anyone in the high risk area is advised to check out the technical information on how to manage the wheat midge on Alberta Agriculture's web site. Monitoring for wheat midge has to be done from heading to flowering. Evening is the time to monitor, between 8:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m., on warm (greater than 15°C), windless (less than 10 km/h) nights. One adult midge for every four heads warrants control measures. There is a very narrow window of application for control measures. To be economically effective, the spray has to occur before end of flowering. Most of the damage to the crop occurs at this time and late chemical applications have practically the same effect as not spraying at all.

**Wheat stem sawfly** is on the rise from Medicine Hat to Lethbridge. Next to grasshoppers, wheat stem sawfly was the biggest insect threat to cereals in the south. If 10 to 15 per cent of last year's crop was cut by sawfly, then control measures for this year's crop are warranted. Growing resistant varieties is still the most effective control measure for this pest.

Farmers in the south should also be aware of **cutworm** problems. Pale western cutworms were prevalent in the Fort McLeod , Lethbridge and Nobleford areas, as well as points south and east. Problems were also reported in and around Millet. Growers in the Peace have also been experiencing cutworm problems in grass seed fields over the last year or two. The problem could continue especially in the drier areas of the Peace.

"These are the main pests of concern for the upcoming season," says Calpas. "Control information for these and other pests can be found on Alberta Agriculture's internet web site at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca>."

Factsheets on lygus bug, cabbage seedpod weevil, diamondback moth and wheat midge can be ordered from Alberta Agriculture's publications office by calling 1-800-292-5697.

*Contact: Jim Calpas*
*(780) 422-4911*

## Crop Protection 2002

The information needed to make the best decisions on insecticide, herbicide or other chemical treatment needs for crops is available in ***Crop Protection 2002***. The crop protection book is reviewed, updated and produced each year to give Alberta farmers the most current information on herbicides, insecticides, fungicides and rodenticides.

*Cont'd on page 4*

"Commonly known as the *Blue Book*, the publication is the most up-to-date guide of its kind," says Shaffeek Ali, editor and leader of the pest risk management unit with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "The 2002 issue is easy to use and includes new pesticide registrations, formulation changes, minor use registrations and a complete guide to safety, including protective clothing and first aid."

Details on the latest registered mixes and mix restrictions, application tips, expected results, storage and first aid precautions are included in the guide along with a listing of the weeds, diseases or pests controlled by each chemical.

Some of the features in ***Crop Protection 2002*** are:

- an updated listing of pesticide container disposal sites with contact names and telephone numbers
- chemical group numbers on the same page as the chemical providing quick reference for herbicide resistance management
- a chart on Group Classification by Modes of Action
- new pesticide registrations, new herbicide tank mixes and the new crop varieties for the new registrations

"As well as information on new chemicals, the latest registered mixes and expected results, the guide provides ideas, tips and directions for sprayer tank clean-out, chemical application, storage and first aid precautions," adds Ali. "Even though the guide includes more information each year, the cost has been kept down. It?s still only $10, plus GST, a great value that helps farmers protect their investments by helping them choose the right way to treat their crops."

"Identification, advance planning and proper use are important concepts in protecting crops," says Ali. "Arming yourself with up-to-date information is cost-effective and makes good sense."

As well as the *Blue Book*, all of the information about the selection and application of chemicals to protect crops is available on CD-ROM this year. This CD program features the same information as the ***Crop Protection 2002*** book, with the added bonus of interactivity. Just a few mouse clicks takes you directly to the chemical information you need. The program can automatically find the chemicals that will attack a specific crop problem. The CD-ROM is also available for $10 (plus GST).

The ***Crop Protection 2002*** publication and CD-ROM are available from Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6.

VISA and MasterCard orders can be placed by calling toll free 1-800-292-5697. The shipping and handling cost per order is $2, plus GST.

*Contact: Shaffeek Ali*
*(403)422-4909*

## Crop disease control

Crop disease control seems like a strange thing to be concerned about right now, but this may be the time when farmers are making decisions that influence crop health most. Too often we think of sprays as the answer to a problem when they are only tools that help correct the problem.

"Probably the most important tool farmers have at their disposal is crop rotation," says Ron Hockridge, crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "Crop rotation is directly related to the amount of soil borne or stubble borne diseases a crop may have to face. It is also an important factor in developing a diverse weed control program. However, it is not a very effective defense against wind borne diseases. It's still necessary to know what crop diseases you get each year and how severe they are."

The seed used also has a big influence. Choosing varieties that have some resistance to the most prevalent diseases is the first step. If it is clean, with good germ and high vigor, it will help to get the crop off to a quick start. Testing cereals for Fusarium head blight and canola for blackleg will help prevent bringing in the worst diseases. Seed treatment pays off in all circumstances except in cases where the seed is very vigorous and climatic conditions are close to ideal.

Other cultural practices that promote quick establishment of the crop reduce disease incidence by avoiding crop stress. Shallow seeding into a firm seedbed is one practice that comes to mind. Natural soil limitations are hard to eliminate, but it may be possible to ease some situations.

"Crop monitoring may seem like a lost cause when farmers likely won't be taking action until quite late in the development of the plant," adds Hockridge. "It does, however, help a producer get a better feel for the progress of both crop and disease. When the time comes to make the fungicide decision, a producer that has watched his crop closely will have a better idea of how severe the problem can become before the crop is mature, simply by noting how fast the crop is growing and how fast the disease is developing on it. There are no guarantees because the weather late in the season often dictates the end effect."

Finally, some time needs to be spent identifying what diseases are affecting a crop and documenting the end result. More information on several diseases and how to control them in the off-season may be readily available, but you need your own data on your own crop to know how important it is to you.

*Contact: Ron Hockridge*
*(780) 361-1240*

*Cont'd on page 5*

## Irrigation amendments respond to stakeholder recommendations

Amendments made to the *Irrigation Act* on February 27, 2002 will help irrigation districts manage allocated water more effectively and efficiently.

Little Bow MLA Barry McFarland introduced the *Irrigation Districts Amendment Act* to accommodate small volume water users who receive water for non-irrigation purposes. The changes will allow them to continue to be served by irrigation districts, without the need for a separate licence under the *Water Act*. A new category, called Rural Water Use, will be created for water use in households, on shelter belts, or for small livestock operations.

Other amendments will ease the transfer of portions of an irrigation district's licensed water allocation or allow changes to the expansion limit of an irrigation district. These changes would occur only if there is no significant effect on irrigators or if they are in the general public's interest.

"We heard from our stakeholders that some sections of the legislation needed clarification to honour its original intent," says McFarland. "We have responded with amendments so that irrigation districts can better manage the water allocated to them." The *Irrigation Districts Act* was passed in 1999 and came into force in 2000.

Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, adds that irrigation is of vital economic benefit to the province's southern agriculture industry.

"Eighty per cent of southern Alberta's agricultural production and 70 per cent of its processing is directly linked to irrigation," she says. "Irrigation water contributes to our quality of life, supplying nearly 50 communities with water for domestic use. It helps improve our industry's competitiveness by allowing growth, diversity and agricultural processing."

Recent statistics show that more than 1.3 million acres of crops are grown within the 13 irrigation districts, comprising nearly 20 per cent of the province's agricultural gross domestic product Water provided by irrigation districts also serves industrial users, strengthens Alberta's fish and wildlife population and enhances recreational opportunities.

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*(780) 422-7683*

Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton

## Legislation formalizes merger of AOC and AFSC

Legislation providing a smooth transition for the merger between Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC) and Alberta Opportunity Company (AOC) was introduced in the Legislature on February 27, 2002.

Leduc MLA Albert Klapstein introduced the *Agriculture Financial Services Amendment Act* that will give AFSC expanded responsibility for the business assets, obligations and opportunities of AOC. Modifications to the Act also include several changes that will provide AFSC more flexibility in delivering effective and efficient financial products and services to Albertans.

"Everything is on schedule for the merger between these two organizations," says Klapstein, who is also a member of the Standing Policy Committee on Agriculture and Municipal Affairs. "These changes give AFSC the power to expand its services so that it can serve a broader diversity of Albertans than it could in the past. It will allow the financial products and services currently offered by AOC to continue as part of AFSC."

Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, comments that reducing administration and combining the strengths of both organizations will better serve the needs of Albertans.

"We will provide a one-window approach to made-in-Alberta financial solutions for more than 25,000 small business and farm clients," she says. "The merger will allow financial products and services formerly offered by AOC to be more widely available across Alberta."

Additional changes to the Agriculture Financial Services Act will increase program flexibility and lending limits.

AFSC is a provincial Crown Corporation that provides Albertans with unique financial services including crop insurance, farm income disaster protection as well as farm, agribusiness and small business loans.

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# Benchmark your family spending

Many farmers are currently working on farm records so that they will be in good shape for an accountant to prepare year-end statements. Others may be reviewing income and expense records so they're ready when it's time to negotiate an operating loan. When it comes to farm records, farmers and farm managers might want to take a closer look at their personal withdrawal column when preparing to meet with a loans officer or accountant. Agricultural loans' officers believe many farm families underestimate their personal spending.

"A thousand dollars a month is just not realistic for family living," says Karen Comeau, regional credit manager with Alberta Treasury Branch (ATB) Financial for central and southern Alberta. "Yet many farm families estimate around this amount. Low estimates may get the farm business in trouble over the year."

Though there has not been a study of Alberta farm family spending since 1991, Statistics Canada recently released results of their survey of household spending for 2000. Alberta and Ontario share the honors for highest average spending. Here are the results for the 1,514 Alberta families who answered detailed questions about their spending. The average household size for the families was 2.69 people, and the sample included urban, rural and some farm families.

| | Annual $ | Monthly $ |
|---|---|---|
| **Total expenditures** | **62,093** | **5,174** |
| Personal income taxes | 12,751 | 1,063 |
| Personal insurance payments and pension contributions | 3,324 | 277 |
| Gifts of money and contributions | 1,662 | 139 |
| **Total current consumption** | **44,356** | **3,696** |
| Food | 6,496 | 541 |
| Shelter | 10,917 | 910 |
| Household Operation | 2,808 | 234 |
| Household furnishings and equipment | 1,915 | 160 |
| Clothing | 2,609 | 217 |
| Transportation | 8,988 | 749 |
| Health care | 1,907 | 159 |
| Personal care | 777 | 65 |
| Recreation | 3,963 | 330 |
| Reading materials and other printed matter | 311 | 26 |
| Education | 1,001 | 83 |
| Tobacco products and alcoholic beverages | 1,329 | 111 |
| Games of chance | 303 | 25 |
| Miscellaneous | 1,032 | 86 |

Some of these totals may seem surprising. Historically, farm families spend less on shelter, household operation and transportation, because many of the costs can be shared with the business. Health care expenses are typically higher for farm families. But food and recreation are generally fairly similar for farm and urban families.

"Although it's interesting to compare, every family is unique and has different spending patterns," says Jean Wilson, business development advisor with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Agriculture Business Management Branch. "Different things are important depending on values and the stage in the farm business or family life cycle."

The best way to find out more about your family spending is to keep track of where the money goes for at least a few months and preferably a year or two. Most financial institutions can provide your financial data in a format that is compatible with family finance software such as Quicken or Microsoft Money. This means that you can download the transactions from your chequing, savings or credit card directly to your bookkeeping software. Another idea that will make tracking family spending easier is to set up separate accounts for family living. Transfer a family living allowance from your farm business to the family account on a regular basis.

Knowing where the money goes will bring benefits to both the farm and the family. As the old saying goes - 'The farm makes the living, the family makes the living worthwhile'.

*Contact:* *Jean Wilson*
*(403) 556-4244*

# Agri-education and school tours in the farm direct marketing mix

For most farms *agri-education* means providing a quality agricultural, education experience for school children and adults alike.

"*Agri-education* can be incorporated into many existing farm direct marketing operations," says Kerry Engel, Rural Development Specialist-Business with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Westlock. "Some farms are taking advantage of this growing trend to diversify specifically into offering school tours that are developmentally and age appropriate for the Kindergarten to grade-three child."

Three key elements for *agri-education* are:

- activities need to be hands-on and interactive to keep the attention and interest of this age group.
- written and verbal information should be geared to the developmental level of the group.
- it must be fun!

*Cont'd on page 7*

***What can you do on a school tour?*** Activities can be self-directed, hands-on or guided. Many farms take advantage of teachable moments to explain modern farming techniques.

Here are a few ideas:

- tour the farm, and stop in a field where children get to plant or harvest something
- let the students have contact with animals. Explain why chickens are kept in cages and calves are ear tagged
- learn about water conservation and sustainable agricultural practices
- learn about soil in a worm tunnel
- take a trip to the past and visit antique equipment
- have an interactive puppet show about bugs
- take a ride on a tractor-drawn wagon
- have a lesson on photosynthesis and fruit & vegetable picking
- tour a processing facility
- taste the product
- take a nature hike in your forest
- have some play time

"Many farms also offer a specially designed booklet for teachers (one per school) that includes resources, handouts and activity ideas to follow-up the concepts presented during the school tour," adds Engel.

Leslie Forsythe, Forsythe Family Farms in Ontario, was one of several speakers sharing their experiences with school tours last year at the North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Conference. While Forsythe encountered some difficulties associated with hosting tours, she gradually developed a number of different policies to make tours run smoother and keep her staff happier. These include:

- adult to student ratio when billing
- cancellation policy
- confirmation reply forms and deposits for tours booked
- extended time billing for lunch
- litterless lunches
- minimum charge for half day and full day tours

Forsythe feels that school tours have been a positive addition to their farm marketing strategy. She enjoys the challenge of improving them each year and keeping them relevant for the teachers.

To determine whether or not school tours could be part of a farm direct venture, find out if anyone in the area is offering tours and the number of schools/students within a one-hour radius of the farm. Next, do some research into ways to reach this audience. Find out when the teacher's Professional Development or Convention dates are, and find out the names of teachers teaching K-3. It may be time to board that old yellow bus again, not as a student but as and agri-educator

For more ideas, check out how these farm direct marketers are promoting their school tour programs:

<www.pizzafarm.org>

<www.wattfarms.com>

<www.pumpkincountry.com>

<www.countylineorchard.com>

<www.duncanfamilyfarms.com>

<www.forsythefamilyfarms.com>

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# 4-H Ambassadors help spread the word

In Alberta, there are 30 senior 4-H members that serve a two-year term as a volunteer 4-H Ambassador. They are selected based on exceptional contributions to 4-H in their club and community. For the members, it is an honour to become a 4-H Ambassador, but it is also an opportunity to further develop public relations, marketing and leadership skills that will help them in their future careers. "I love doing the work to improve 4-H," is how Shawna Wallace of Byemore sums up her experience.

Each year the group gets in-depth training to help them with their role and to assist them as they help build leaders for tomorrow. "This year we will focus on how a volunteer board is structured," says Betty Grudnizki, provincial 4-H media and marketing specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

The group developed a mission statement: 'to enhance, educate and promote opportunities in 4-H to members and non-members through leadership and representation'. The next step is learning to implement it in their role and jobs.

"Through this training, the members enter adulthood with practical knowledge that any volunteer board would benefit from," adds Grudnizki.

Since the Ambassadors are also promoters, they receive training on doing a television interview, learning the finer points of persuasion, and making presentations to encourage members to stay in the club.

The Ambassadors actively seek opportunities to promote 4-H programs. Kelsey MacMillan, an Ambassador from Irma, spoke to more than 1,000 registrants at the Farm Tech 2002 conference in Red Deer on January 31. She presented her vision of the agriculture industry of the future and created much discussion. "I have found that being an Ambassador is so rewarding. I am able to give 110 per cent of my true self," she says of her Ambassador experience.

*Cont'd on page 8*

You may have met a 4-H Ambassador at some of the major fairs and exhibitions across the province. Displays are a common marketing tool, as is an appearance by Cleaver the Beaver, the 4-H mascot. Ambassadors offer hundreds of volunteer hours to local events as presenters, counsellors, judges, and leader's helpers, and they never forget their roots. "I think one of the most important jobs we can do as Amabassadors is to be role models for younger members," reflects Tony Jeglum of Clive.

"The Alberta 4-H Ambassador program is the best of 4-H. Members further their skills, the program receives excellent volunteer service, and the rural community has a human resource for today and tomorrow," concludes Grudnizki.

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# Alberta agriculture estimates

Many of the estimates listed were jointly prepared by Statistics Canada and the Statistics and Data Development Unit of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

### Cattle and calves

- Alberta continues to lead the country in cattle and calf inventories (5.21 million head), followed by Saskatchewan (2.33 million head) and Ontario (2.01 million head)
- currently, Alberta accounts for more than one-half (55.6 per cent) of the total Western Canadian herd of 9.38 million head and 40.2 per cent of the national total of 12.96 million
- as of January 1, 2002, the estimated total inventory of cattle and calves on farms in the province was 5.21 million head, down 2.7 per cent from the January 1, 2001 figure of 5.36 million
- noteworthy, was the decline evidenced in the beef breeding herd (cows and heifers). As of January 1, 2002, beef cows totalled 1,668,000, down 0.3 per cent, from 1,673,000 a year earlier. Likewise, beef heifers for replacement fell 6.6 per cent to 226,000 head, from the estimate of 242,000 in 2001. The drop in cow and heifer numbers was not surprising, given the substantial increase in slaughter (heifers) and interprovincial exports (cows) in 2001.
- Alberta reported a total of 95,000 milk cows as of January 1, 2002, down 5.9 per cent from the previous year, while dairy heifers fell 8.1 per cent to 34,000. Increasing milk productivity was among the factors influencing the decline

### Pigs

- across Canada, Alberta ranks fourth in pig inventories, behind Quebec (3.77 million head), Ontario (3.14 million head) and Manitoba (2.39 million head)
- Alberta currently accounts for approximately 35.3 per cent of the estimated total western Canadian pig population of 5.75 million head and 15.5 per cent of the national total of 13.06 million head
- estimates at January 1, 2002, show the size of the Alberta herd increasing by 8.6 per cent, with the total number of pigs on farms at 2.03 million head, compared to the revised figure of 1.87 million a year ago. The increase also marks the sixth straight quarter of herd growth, on a year-over-year basis.
- expansion continues to be evident in the sow herd, as numbers grew for the ninth consecutive quarter, on a year-over-year basis. As of January 1, 2002, sows and bred gilts were estimated at 214,300 head, up 3.2 per cent from the previous quarter (October 1, 2001), and 9.7 per cent from a year earlier.

### Sheep and lambs

- after two years of steady expansion, sheep and lamb numbers on Alberta farms were down. The January 1, 2002 sheep and lamb estimate puts the provincial total at 165,000 head, or 1.2 per cent smaller than a year earlier
- all of the decline was attributed to a drop in ewe and ram numbers. Ewes fell by 2.5 per cent to 110,900 head, while rams slipped 3.4 per cent to 5,600. Increasing in 2002 were replacement lambs, up 3.3 per cent to 15,500 head, while market lambs rose 1.5 per cent to 33,000
- Alberta currently accounts for about 42 per cent of the total estimated sheep and lamb population of 394,300 head in Western Canada, and roughly 21 per cent of the Canadian total of 801,100 head. The province ranks third behind Ontario (195,000 head) and Quebec (180,000 head) in sheep and lamb inventories

### Beekeeping

- preliminary estimates show 2001 to be a less than average year for honey production, with 16.1 million pounds of honey produced, compared to 24.1 million in 2000, and the five-year (1995- 1999) average of 25.7 million
- 2001 estimates are that Alberta produced roughly one-quarter or 23.0 per cent of the national total of 70.0 million pounds of honey
- the total value of Alberta produced honey (excluding wax) in 2000 was $19.7 million (28.5 per cent of the national total of $69.3 million). Comparable estimates for 2001 are not yet available
- in 2001, the estimated number of beekeepers in Alberta was 747, while nationally the total was 9,222
- Alberta reported managing an estimated 227,000 colonies in 2001, up 4.6 per cent from 2000

*Cont'd on page 9*

- in 2001, approximately 34,000 colonies were used in pollination services for the production of hybrid canola seed. These bees produce very little honey

### *Estimates of the 2001 crop production of principal field crops*

- drought conditions, insect problems, shortage of irrigation water and other adverse factors experienced in the 2001 crop season reduced crop yields and decreased acreage harvested in Alberta
- in 2001, wheat production (winter wheat, spring wheat and durum wheat) totalled 6.11 million metric tonnes, down significantly from the 1999 total of 8.18 million metric tonnes and the 2000 total of 7.29 million metric tonnes
- oats production is estimated at 592,200 metric tonnes for 2001
- production of barley is estimated at 5.23 million metric tonnes for 2001, down three per cent from production totals in 2000 and 14 per cent from the five-year average
- in 2001, canola production is estimated at 1.72 million metric tones, down 20 per cent from 2000 and 25 per cent from the five-year average. This lower production is mostly due to lower canola acreage
- dry pea production in Alberta was estimated at 542 thousand metric tonnes in 2001, down 10 per cent from 2000 (due mainly to lower yield), but up 15 per cent from the five-year average thanks to a much higher acreage
- tame hay production in Alberta was estimated at 4.04 million metric tonnes in 2001, down 27 per cent from 2000 and 29 per cent from the five year average. The low production has resulted in a tight supply and high hay prices in Alberta

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## Farm income estimates - 2001

The estimates listed are based on an Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) farm income forecast released in January and a subsequent February release by Statistics Canada on farm cash receipts. Both were done in consultation with the Statistics and Data Development Unit of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

### *Farm cash receipt estimates - 2001 (Statistics Canada)*

- Alberta farm cash receipts totaled a record $8.3 billion in 2001, roughly 23 per cent of the Canadian total, and a close second to Ontario
- Direct program payments to producers reached $836 million in 2001, the second highest on record. Slightly over 62 per cent of the payments or $519 million were paid out under the Alberta/Canada FIDP (Farm Income Disaster Program) and FIAP (Farm Income Assistance Program)
- Farm market receipts (total farm cash receipts less direct program payments to producers) from the sale of livestock products and crops totaled a record $7.5 billion in 2001, up 11.9 per cent from 2000.
- The leading Alberta farm market receipt items in 2001 were cattle and calves at $3.9 billion; wheat at $920 million; canola at $578 million; hogs at $563 million and dairy products at $348 million. The top five categories represented 76 per cent of total farm cash receipts and 84 per cent of total farm market receipts.
- In 2001, Alberta had the highest farm market receipts from livestock products in Canada at just under $5.2 billion, representing 27 per cent of the national total.

### *Farm expenses and depreciation estimates - 2001 (AAFC)*

- Alberta farm net operating expenses reached a new record of $6.2 billion in 2001, an increase of 3.8 per cent over 2000.
- The largest single farm expense item in 2001 was livestock purchases from outside the province at just under $1.2 billion, or roughly 19 per cent of total net operating expenses.
- The next highest expense items were commercial feed at $804 million; net interest expenses at $551 million; wages at $506 million; fertilizer at $560 million, and machinery fuel at $388 million. The top six expense items represented 65 per cent of total net operating expenses for Alberta farmers.
- Energy related expenses for heating fuel, electricity, machinery fuel, and fertilizer totaled $1.1 billion or just over 18 per cent of total net operating expenses.
- Annual depreciation levels on machinery and buildings in Alberta were estimated at $1.0 billion in 2001.

### *Net farm income estimates - 2001 (Alberta Agriculture)*

- Net farm cash income in Alberta totaled just over $2.1 billion in 2001 or over 23 per cent of the Canadian total, the highest of any province in Canada with Saskatchewan second at $1.8 billion.
- Realized net income, which is net farm cash income plus income-in-kind less depreciation, was almost $1.2 billion in 2001 versus only $506 million in 2000.
- Total net income represents realized net income plus an allowance for change in the value of inventory. The Alberta total net income was an estimated $958 million in 2001, as the value of inventory change was negative.

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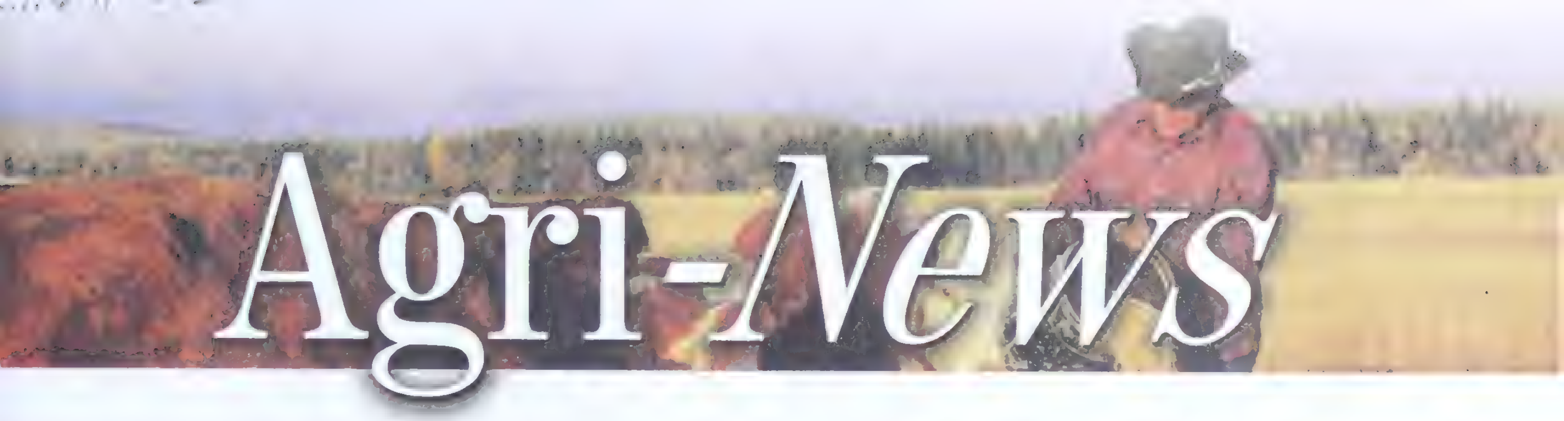

# Agri-News

March 25, 2002

## The Water Act - three years later

The deadline for registration of traditional water use (under the Water Act) came and went on Dec. 31, 2001. This voluntary program allowed existing traditional farm operations to establish water rights for up to 1,375,000 gallons per year, through a registration process. When the dust had settled (2001 was a rather dry year), a total of about 27,000 farms, using over 100,000 water sources, had registered. This represents an estimated 90 per cent of the traditional agricultural water users. A three-year window of opportunity was provided to complete the registration process, but over 20,000 of these applications came in during the last month. Registrations are no longer being accepted. Any new or increased water use, except household use, requires a water license under the Water Act.

"Alberta Environment has set up a processing center to process registration applications," says Ken Williamson, agricultural water specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Red Deer. "A target date of March 31, 2002 has been set to complete the processing of the registrations and send out the documents."

When registrations have been processed, they are listed on Alberta Environment web site at <http://www3.gov.ab.ca/env/water/approvalviewer.html>.

### What if you didn't register?

Registration was voluntary. If you were using less than 1,375,000 gallons of water per year before January 1, 1999, you can continue to do so as an exempted agricultural user. But, when the land eventually changes hands, the new owner will not have a legal water right (except for household use) unless they apply for, and get, a water license.

If there is a residence on a property, there is statutory right for up to 275,000 gallons of water per year for household use. The actual in house water use for a family of four should be less than 100,000 gallons/year. This leaves about 175,000 gal/year for watering gardens and livestock. Someone with just a few cows to water from a household water source, 40 to 50 head, could still be considered a household user.

### What is involved in getting a water license?

To get a water license the applicant may need to show that there is enough water available to meet their needs and not have a negative effect on neighboring water users. Neighbors with household rights, or water rights established by registration or licensing, will have a senior water right to a new development. Applications are judged on their merits by Alberta Environment. If a well is just to be used for watering a few cattle on a summer pasture, for example, then information provided by the

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## This Week

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applicant and the water well driller's report, may be enough to get a license. At the other end of the scale, a well for a feedlot, providing several million gallons of water per year, would likely need to be properly assessed by a hydro geological consultant before a license would be considered.

Many surface water sources also require licenses. Large dug-outs, dams, dugouts located in water bodies, dugouts filled by groundwater seepage, and springs are all examples projects that require licensing.

To be sure what the requirements will be for your situation, it is best to contact the Alberta Environment Regional office for your area.

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## Elm tree pruning ban in Alberta starts April 1

Alberta must be constantly aware of the threat of Dutch elm disease (DED) to our elms, since it presses at our borders from two sides, Saskatchewan and Montana. When it comes to elm trees, it is important to know there is an annual provincial pruning ban in effect between April 1 and September 30.

The reason for this ban is that the vectors of DED are active between these dates and can be attracted to the healthy elms by the sap scent given off from open wounds created by pruning. If these beetles are carrying the fungal spores on their bodies, they could potentially spread the disease from elm tree to elm tree.

The vectors of the DED are the smaller European elm bark beetle (SEEBB) and the native elm bark beetle (NEBB). The reason we should prune our healthy elms is to remove dead wood, which serves as beetle breeding habitat. This pruning must only be done between October 1 and March 31 of the following year, when the beetles are dormant.

Several municipalities already have an elm-pruning bylaw in place which would result in a fine if you prune an elm after March 31. DED, SEEBB and the NEBB are declared pests under the Agricultural Pests Act making it illegal to transport or store elm firewood. All pruned elm wood must be burned or buried to prevent the possible spread of DED.

In 2001, SEEBB were found in a number of municipalities in the province. Although beetles were captured in Edmonton, Calgary, Taber, Coutts, Lethbridge and Wetaskawin and Lloydminster there was no DED incidents. Alberta has a total of 220,000 elms growing in the urban communities and an additional estimated 400,000 elms are found growing in the rural areas.

For more information about DED and how to prevent this disease, check out the following web page <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/navigation/pests/trees/index.html>.

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## Greenhouse business requires knowledge and skills

During the early part of spring, calls for information on starting a greenhouse business start coming in to Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre North (CDCN) in Edmonton. Most people want to discuss the many aspects of greenhouse planning, profit margins, crops that are most profitable and production practices.

"The greenhouse business is usually a family run business and it requires a lot of commitment and understanding," says Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, greenhouse crops specialist at the CDCN. "The success of a greenhouse business depends on growing high quality plants. There are several components of a greenhouse business that a beginner grower must pay attention to, and the quality and quantity of water available during peak consumption period is the most important component."

A test of irrigation water provides a lot of information about its suitability for greenhouse crops. The availability of good quality water is going to be a major issue that can affect the viability of a greenhouse business and the growth of the industry. It is important for all greenhouse businesses to get the water supply tested and plan accordingly. Most often, it's the sodium in the water that can cause production problems.

"For those who want to start a greenhouse business, they need to know the gross revenue potential of the crops they are planning to grow, and also the production costs," adds Nabi Chaudhary, senior economist with Economics & Competitive-ness of Alberta Agriculture. "These production costs include operating costs and also the investment costs."

"Growing diverse crops is important for greenhouse crop growers," says Mirza. "In the vegetable sector, seedless cucumbers are grown on a large scale in the province and Alberta imports practically no large quantities of cucumbers, except in December and January when Mexican cucumbers come in."

"The province's industry has grown to the point that Alberta is almost self sufficient in the supply of seedless cucumbers. In case of tomatoes, however, the province imports at least 70 per cent of its tomato demand," says Nabi.

While there is more room to grow peppers in Alberta, this crop requires practical experience by the growers and also a much higher quality greenhouse structure for environmental controls. "A state of the art greenhouse with a computerized system to control heating, ventilation, carbon dioxide injection and humidity control will cost between $15 to $20 per square foot," states Mirza.

Technologies for the future include better water treatments and recycling systems, including biological filtration, use of carbon dioxide based on the exact need of plants, and computers that can program irrigation based on sunlight and plant needs. The

*Cont'd on page 3*

greenhouse business requires close attention to details from seeding to harvest. Food safety and farm environment are becoming increasingly important as consumers are paying more attention to the quality of greenhouse produced foods.

Chaudhary adds, "In the greenhouse industry, the loss of one plant, for any reason whether it be disease, insect or simply breakage during handling, will directly affect the business' gross revenue. For example the loss of one cucumber plant is a loss of close to $50."

The Alberta Greenhouse Growers Association (AGGA) is a growers organization that is constantly striving to provide information to growers and address industry related issues. For further information on this industry, check out the AGGA web site at <www.agga.ca>.

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## Smart practices during dry years

Many people are wondering whether 2002 will be a repeat of last year. It was dry in the fall, the winter has been warmer than normal and not much snow fell. It is time to think about what to do in a dry spring. Although back-to-back droughts are rare, and the odds of having a dry year again are slim, there are a few things producers can do to prepare for a dry year without hurting the operation if it turns wet

"The first things to consider are the practices that contribute to crop health," says Ron Hockridge, crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "Seed treatments protect against seedling diseases every year. They are probably most beneficial in cold dry soils where crops stay in the susceptible stage for a long period of time. Shallow seeding will help the crop pop out of the ground more quickly, as long as there is enough moisture for germination. In a dry year, adequate seeding rates are important as germination rates tend to be lower. It may be necessary to compensate a lower germination rate with higher seeding rates to get good stands. In moist years there is enough moisture to sustain more plants, so standard seeding rates would apply."

Weed control in a dry year also requires some thought. Research has shown that early weed removal reduces competition, but how early should it be. Part of a weed control program relies on competition from the crop keeping weeds down. In conditions where the canopy closes in quickly, the best time to spray is the one- to two-leaf stage. In slower growing years the best time is in the three- to four-leaf stage.

"Fertilizer management is another factor that is harder to determine in uncertain times," adds Hockridge. "Plants respond less to increased levels of fertility when it is dry, but they make better use of water when fertility levels are adequate. For economic reasons, it is generally recommended to reduce the amount of fertilizer applied in a dry year. However, if you follow this philosophy too far, you could lose the opportunity of good yields when weather is favourable. I think there is a saying that sums it up - 'you don't make much money when planning for a crop failure'."

Fertilizer placement is a more important factor. In dry years you can't place as much fertilizer close to the seed. The best strategy is to use a reasonable level of fertilizer and band it away from the seed. If conditions stay dry, you will not hurt the seed and a band will not disappear or be tied up by the soil as quickly as a broadcast application. If wetter conditions prevail, there is still potential for a good yield.

Fertilizing hay and pasture is a different story. Broadcast fertilize just before a rain is ideal. Then, enough rain is needed to get nutrients into the soil. This is not always possible. There has been some research work done on fertilizing while the snow is still on the ground. Urea applications have shown good results when the prills melt their way to the ground and the melting snow carries nutrients to the crop roots. There is, however, a risk of nitrogen loss if there is enough snow to cause run-off or denitrification (the natural conversion of nitrate to gas).

"Moving to more drought tolerant crops can be a positive move - especially in the short term," says Hockridge. "There may be more benefit in sticking to a good crop rotation in the long run though. In fact, planning for drought is a bit of a gamble at any time."

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## Alberta agri-food exports set a new record in 2001

2001 was another record year for Alberta exporters of primary and processed agricultural and food products. The latest statistics show that Alberta agri-food exports reached a record $6.0 billion, advancing 14 per cent over 2000 ($5.3 billion). Nationally, Alberta represented 23 per cent of Canada's total agri-food exports.

- Gains were recorded in exports of both primary commodities (animals and crops) and valued added processed products. However, value added exports at $3.1 billion, were higher and grew at a faster rate (up 17%) than exports of animals and crops (up 11%). During the last decade (1992-2001), exports of value added products continued a steady upward trend

*Cont'd on page 4*

- The value of primary commodity exports totaled $2.9 billion and resulted from larger sales of live cattle and hogs, canola seed, dried beans and cereal grains. On the other hand, growth in value added exports was driven by beef, pork, malt, cereal preparations and dehydrated alfalfa. Beef accounted for more than half of value added exports
- Increases in exports of Alberta's major crops resulted mainly from higher prices than quantities. Exports of wheat, Alberta's second largest export commodity, rose slightly by three per cent to $1.2 billion while quantity declined nine per cent to 5.6 million tonnes. Iran, the number one buyer of Alberta wheat in the previous year, declined its purchases by 26 per cent. As well, Alberta's exports of barley, oats and other grains rose in value but quantity declined. As a result of improved prices, exports of canola seed rose 14 per cent in value, with a moderate increase in volume of about four per cent. Japan remained the major export market for canola seed, followed by China and Mexico
- Exports of live cattle (excluding purebred) continued to recover from declines in previous years. The 2001 value of exported cattle surged 40 per cent to $712 million, well above the last five-year average of $606 million. As well, the number of head exported grew 29 per cent. Also, sales of live hogs rose almost 34 per cent to $124 million with quantity up 29 per cent. Larger shipments to the United States contributed to the growth
- As in previous years, Alberta benefited from gains in beef exports. Beef remains Alberta's top value added export product, at $1.7 billion, rising 20 per cent over 2000, with quantity up 14 per cent. Most of the increase was due to greater sales to the United States, Japan and Mexico. During the last two years, Mexico has been the fastest growing market for Alberta beef. Consequently, Mexico has replaced Japan as a second largest importer of Alberta beef after the United States. Increases were also reported in exports of other meats. Pork exports rose 23 per cent to $217 million with quantity up 9.0 per cent. After two years of declines, exports of horsemeat advanced 27 per cent, reaching $65 million
- The United States has remained Alberta's strongest trading partner accounting for more than half of total agri-food exports in 2001. The value of exports to the U.S. rose 19 per cent to $3.3 billion, due in large to increased exports of live cattle, hogs, beef and cereal preparations. Exports to Japan, Alberta's second largest market, totaled $793 million, up 20 per cent, because of substantial increases in sales of beef, pork, canola seed and wheat. As well, exports to China rose significantly by 40 per cent to $297 million, mostly due to larger sales of canola seed, hides and skins and barley. A significant increase of 44 per cent was reported in exports to Mexico ($414 million), the third largest market, mostly as a result of record high sales of beef ($219 million)

In 2001, Alberta agri-food exports posted increases in all major trading regions except for Africa and the Middle East region.

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## When it comes to bean seed - size doesn't count

The size of the seed planted has been shown to have a significant impact on seedling establishment, seedling vigor and crop growth of several small-seeded field crops, such as jute mustard, coriander and carrot.

"In general, within a given crop species, larger seeds contain a higher amount of food reserves than smaller seeds," says Manjula Bandara, special crops agronomist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South (CDCS), Brooks. "Seedlings grown from larger seeds, therefore, are expected to have greater vigor and faster growth than those grown from small seeds."

For most crops, including beans, crop productivity is closely related to seedling vigor and the uniformity of stand establishment. A uniform seed size lot can produce an evenly maturating crop, while different seed size categories may produce crops with varying maturity among the respective resulting crops.

"Dry beans are the third largest pulse crop grown in Alberta, and are mainly grown under irrigation," adds Bandara. "Uneven seedling emergence of the crop is frequently evident in commercial production. As a result of this non-uniform crop maturity, crop quality is lowered."

The study ***Effect of seed size on plant growth, seed yield and seed size profile of pinto bean (Phaseolus vulgaris L.)*** was conducted at the CDCS to examine the effect of the size of seeds planted on seedling growth, seed yield and seed size profile of the resulting crop of three pinto beans cultivars (Pintium, Othello and Fargo), The seeds of the three cultivars were screened into four categories (<7.1 mm, 7.1-7.9 mm, 7.9-8.7 mm and > 8.7 mm). The crop was seeded at a spacing of 0.18 m between rows (narrow-row seeding) on May 25, 2001 and was grown under irrigation using recommended cultural practices.

Treatments were arranged in a 3 (cultivar) x 4 (seed size) factorial structure in a Randomized Complete Block Design (RCBD) with three replications. On September 6, 2001, prior to crop harvest, 15 plants from each treatment were harvested randomly to determine the mean number and weight of seeds

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per plant. The plots were harvested on September 10, about 10 days after desiccation with Reglone treatment. Date of first flowering, plant height at harvest, 1000-seed weight and seed yield per plot were determined. After seed cleaning, random seed samples of 500g from each treatment were collected and graded into the four categories (<7.1 mm, 7.1-7.9 mm, 7.9-8.7 mm and > 8.7 mm) and expressed as a percentage of the total seed lot.

"Results of the study indicated that bean cultivar had a significant impact on the final plant height, date of first flowering, mean seed weight per plant and seed size profile of the resulting crop," says Bandara. "At harvest, both Othello and Fargo produced significantly taller (10 cm) plants compared to Pintium. Regardless of the size of seeds planted, on average, Pintium flowered five days earlier than both Othello and Fargo, but there was no cultivar difference in terms of crop maturity (all cultivars matured about 98 days after seeding). On average, Pintium produced the heaviest seed and Fargo produced the lightest seed among the three cultivars. Despite this difference, size of seed planted had no significant impact on mean seed number per plant, mean seed weight per plant, plot seed yield or seed size profile of the subsequent bean crop."

It should be noted, however, that the seed size profile was significantly different among the three cultivars used. Pintium, Othello and Fargo produced seed lots with 75, 60 and 46 per cent in the >7.9 mm in diameter category, respectively. Production of a higher portion of larger seeds by Pintium appears to be partially associated with its longer flowering period.

***Acknowledgments*** - Judy Webber and Travis Simo, technologists at CDCS, Brooks, assisted with this study.

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## *Growing Rural Tourism conference a success*

Over 250 delegates attended the second rural tourism conference in Camrose, in February 2002. Delegates included representation from municipal to provincial governments, chambers of commerce, economic development officers, Travel Alberta, facilities, attractions, museums, hotels, bed & breakfasts, and festivals.

"The conference opened on the heels of a tailgate party where the enthusiasm of delegates, committee members and speakers was evident," says Lisa Houle, rural development specialist-business with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Red Deer. "The conference featured several renowned speakers who covered rural development and rural tourism topics of interest to all in attendance."

Dr. Ed Mahoney, senior professor from Michigan State University and one of two keynote speakers discussed the need to make the connection between value-added investment and market identification. Mahoney stated that smart tourism investment should be integrated as a fundamental component of community plans, including economic development, infrastructure support and aesthetics.

He demonstrated that "future hindsight" (a phrase coined by Neal Miller to describe putting yourself forward in time and then looking back) should be used to develop marketing objectives, such as determining what your image is now and what your desired image is, or what current markets and product-line(s) are and what the future product-mix and markets are going to look like.

Sharon Stollery, rural development specialist - business with Alberta Agriculture encouraged conference attendees to 'Think Outside the Barn'. She talked about Alberta Agriculture's support of the agri-tourism industry through such resource allocation as workshops, the Alberta Agri-tourism Directory, fact sheets and most recently the industry consultation. She also elaborated on the cross-government partnership to grow and develop agri-tourism in Alberta. The focus of this new initiative will include: marketing partnerships, new training opportunities, research, advocacy and communication, and partnerships with Country Roads Agri-tourism Product Club.

More information on agri-tourism or the directory can be found on the Alberta Agriculture web site at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/diversify>. To have your agri-tourism business listed on the site, contact Amber Kluthe at (780) 963-6101 (toll free by dialing 310-0000 first).

In addition to the speakers, rural tourism profiles and case studies, over 30 delegates obtained one-on-one advice from 12 resource experts from organizations such as Travel Alberta, Alberta Transportation, Alberta Economic Development and the University of Alberta Practicum Opportunities.

This is the first part of a two-part series. The next article, appearing in the April 1 edition of Agri-News, will cover the second keynote speaker Ted Manning; Derek Coke-Kerr, managing director for Travel Alberta; and, Edmonton feature writer Judy Schultz.

*Contact: Lisa Houle*
*(403) 340-5369*

*Cont'd on page 6*

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# Agri-News Briefs

## Water resources conference

The Canadian Water Resources Association (CWRA) conference is being held at the Medicine Hat Lodge on April 7 to 9, 2002. The theme for the conference is ***Alberta Water Strategy, managing drought with promising solutions***. Water resource management is an important topic to Albertans, and with the drought in many parts of Alberta last year, its profile has heightened. Alberta Environment Minister Lorne Taylor is the keynote speaker on April 8. The CWRA directors meeting follows immediately after the conference ends. For further information or to register, contact JoAnn Schebel, UMA Engineering, Lethbridge at (403) 329-4822 or fax at (403) 329-1678.

## How to store food safely

- Did you know that ground meat should be used or frozen within two days of purchase?
- Are you aware that asparagus will keep fresh for four to five days in the refrigerator when wrapped in a damp towel or stood in water?
- Have you ever wondered how long you can keep a jar of peanut butter or salsa once it's been opened?

There are 12 pages of information about how long to store these and hundreds of other foods in a booklet called ***How to Store Food Safely***. The booklet has been researched and produced by the professional home economists who answer the Food Safety Info Line. This hot-line provides consumers with science based information to help them handle food more safely and to better understand food safety issues. Western Canadians can obtain a copy of the booklet free as well as answers to other food safety questions and concerns by calling the Food Safety Info Line toll-free at 1-800-892-8333. The Food Safety Info Line is answered Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Mountain Time. For more information, contact Jane Carlyle PHEc, coordinator Food Safety Info Line at 1-800-892-8333.

## Rural Safety Network of Alberta

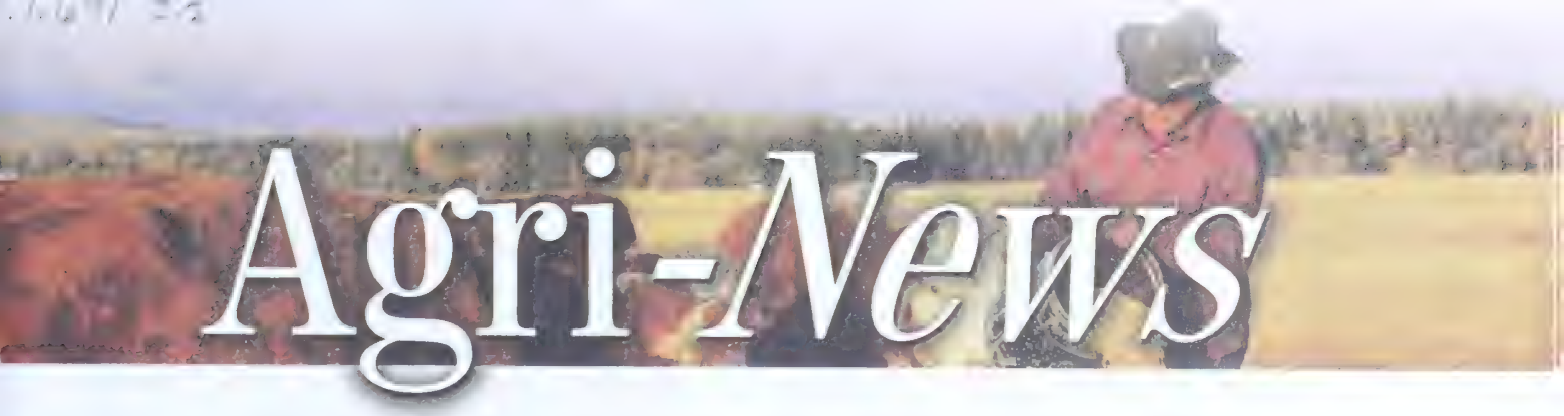
Over the past number of years, rural safety advocates in Alberta have gathered together to discuss rural injury prevention issues of mutual concern. Based on the success of the meetings, participants decided to formalize an Alberta network that would meet on an annual basis. The Rural Safety Network of Alberta was officially formed when its Terms of Reference were approved at a meeting on November 4, 2001. The purpose of the Network is to assist individuals, organizations, communities and regions in Alberta to deliver rural safety programs and information in the province by:

- Fostering cooperation and collaboration in rural safety promotion
- Facilitating, sharing rural safety promotion program knowledge, skills and experience
- Strengthening supportive relationships
- Providing information on rural safety program and service providers in Alberta

Membership is open to anyone who supports the purpose of the Network. Anyone wishing to join the Network may complete and submit a membership form and will then be added to the Network Membership List. The Network will usually meet face-to-face once a year at a one-day meeting. There is no charge for Network membership, however, there may be a minimal registration fee to attend Network meetings and forums. For more information, a membership form, or a copy of the Terms of Reference, contact the Network coordinator, Jennifer Drozdowski, community development manager, Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research at (403) 382-7199, Lethbridge, or e-mail <jen.drozdowski@uleth.ca>.

## Composting conference

The eighth annual composting conference is being held at Olds College on April 4 to 5, 2002. A panel of experts from across Canada will discuss advances in the composting industry. Topics include compost quality standards, municipal composting programs, agricultural systems and others. A trade fair is also featured, where companies exhibit and demonstrate technologies. For further information, contact Kelly MacKinnon, Olds College Centre for Innovation, toll free at 1-800-661-6537 or e-mail <kmackinnon@admin.oldscollege.ab.ca>.



April 1, 2002

## Alberta Crop Insurance 2002: new coverage rules for canola, wheat & cereal silage

Alberta farmers have new options to get more for their crop insurance dollar in 2002 because of the program changes affecting canola, wheat, cereal silage and more.

Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC) administers crop insurance in Alberta. Merle Jacobson, senior manager, Insurance Services AFSC says that the reason for the new Crop Insurance rules is to keep pace with how policyholders manage their farms.

"Every year, we review and make changes to the program to ensure we're offering a product that's relevant for the times. Many of this year's changes have come about through specific requests we've received from customers or industry associations," he says.

*Crop Insurance changes for 2002:*

- **Different coverage amounts for Polish and Argentine canola** - since Polish and Argentine canola have the same end-use and price, they will not be treated as separate crops, but will have different long-term normal yields and premium rates
- **High protein option for wheat** - protein in Red Spring and Durum wheat is a major factor in the price, so Crop Insurance buyers will now be able to elect a high protein price option based on No. 2 - 13 per cent protein. The high protein price option for Red Spring wheat will be available across the province, while Durum will only be available in designated areas where it is insurable. The grade guarantee will remain at No. 2 and protein will not be included
- **Cereal silage insurance pilot program** - producers have always been able to insure cereal silage crops as grain crops, but it meant a pre-harvest yield appraisal by AFSC to determine a grain yield for the crop. In 2002, AFSC is testing two ways of insuring cereal silage crops in the counties of Lethbridge, Red Deer, Minburn, Two Hills and Vermilion River using an area-based approach to determine losses (no need for an AFSC pre-harvest appraisal).

"These are the three key coverage changes for 2002, but several policy changes have also been made," Jacobson says. "The changes include a decrease in the temporary provincial premium credit announced in 2000, which will increase premiums. Producers are encouraged to contact their nearest AFSC district office for more information."

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## This Week

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

AFSC is a provincial Crown Corporation that provides farmers and agribusinesses with financial services including crop insurance, farm income disaster protection and farm and agribusiness loans. The recently announced merger of AOC and AFSC also adds small businesses in rural and urban centers to AFSC's customer base. AFSC can be reached by dialing 1-800-396-0215 in the province.

*Contact:* *Merle Jacobson*
*(403) 782-8229* *
*1-800-396-0215*

* Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton

## Pedigreed seed pays

*Pedigreed seed does not cost - it pays!* is a well-known slogan. Doing economic analysis on this subject requires some assumptions, and prices must be current to get the most use out of the information.

"The first consideration is germination. Pedigreed seed undergoes a germination test at an accredited lab and it must reach a minimum level for each grade," says Ron Hockridge, crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Wetaskiwin. "For example, certified No. 1 wheat must have at least 85 per cent germination. To do a proper analysis, a farmer should test his own seed for comparison. There is the cost of seed testing that needs to be added to homegrown seed, though. While germination is being tested, it's wise to do a vigor test also and compare the results to a pedigreed grade."

Genetic purity is an important measurement. The further your own seed is from pedigreed status, the more off-types it is likely to have. This may be minor, but it can also be significant if it's a lower yielding variety, or something that affects quality.

Weed content is always a controversial issue. Any of the pedigreed grades must be free from primary noxious weeds and cannot have more than three total weed seeds per kilogram to be No. 1, six seeds to be No. 2, and Common No. 2 can have as many as 20 total weed seeds per kilogram. There is no argument that weed competition can greatly reduce crop yield. There is enough of a seed bank in the soil to cause the damage and most farmers don't want to add to this seed bank. They find they can significantly improve their weed control by combining all the chemical and cultural tools they have available. They certainly do not want to add new weed species. The argument for homegrown seed is that you are only adding weeds that are already present.

Diseases can be transported with any seed but they are less prevalent in pedigreed seed. Adding a fungicide seed treatment is another of those practices that usually pays.

Age also reduces the germination and vigor of seed. Germination certificates are only valid for nine months, so you have to ensure they are meaningful for any seed.

"All of these factors make it hard to compare pedigreed versus common seed," adds Hockridge. "Effects are cumulative. You may have 10 per cent better germination on pedigreed seed, but if you lose another 10 per cent of the common seed because of poor seedling vigor, it further reduces the plant stand. It will also adversely affect the health of the plant. This can lead to reduced yield and it can reduce quality. Each effect costs more money. How much difference quality seed makes depends on the price of seed and the price of the resulting crop. In most cases, however, we can say that good quality seed does not cost – it pays!"

*Contact:* *Ron Hockridge*
*(780) 361-1240*

## It's seeding time - what about fertilizer placement?

Because input costs are going up, and it has been so dry on the prairies, every year more farmers direct seed their crops.

"The basic principles of direct seeding have been well tested with time," says Ron Heller, with Alberta Reduced Tillage *LINKAGES* (RTL). "When moisture is not at risk, one-pass direct seeding will provide the grower a range of benefits beyond moisture conservation. However, where seedbed moisture is low or when hot and windy weather enhance evaporation, a seeding system that can optimize available soil moisture is a good idea."

Soil moisture and its effect on plant growth, fertilizer efficiency and optimum crop yield is a no-brainer—without it, nothing else much matters! Direct seeding and fertilizing with low soil disturbance (no-till) champions a dry-land farmer's H20 insufficiencies. Ongoing to the innovation of this technology is an understanding of fertility issues, one of these being nitrogen fertilizer placement.

"Nitrogen fertilizer effect should be understood in three ways. First and fundamental is the product form," says Heller. "Ammonium toxicity is a major mechanism for seed and seedling injury. A relative toxicity is found in the form analysis (ie: Urea @ 46%; UAN @ 28%), but this should not be the only measure. Nitrogen sources can be equally effective when applied as recommended, but each has situations where the type of fertilizer matters.

"This leads to a second way to discuss N fertility: influence of soil moisture and temperature. To avoid a technical discussion, I will generalize this effect by stating that the warmer and the moister the soil, the greater the benefits will be for the crop. Limitations do exist - denitrification, immobilization, volatilization, leaching, soil texture and chemistry, blends and rates, even the application method, broadcast versus banding;

Cont'd on page 3

spring versus fall - all determine fertilizer efficiency and need to be understood, carefully observed, and not generalized too much. The third way is to look at fertilizer N applied at the time of seeding, or placement. Farmer-approved direct seeding methods have resulted in some innovative machinery and by carefully manipulating the soil and crop residue conditions unique to no-till seedbeds, these implements can accurately deliver seed and fertilizer together, single-shoot, or in varying degrees of separation, double or multi-shoot. This is really the heart of any direct seeding system. Understanding those equipment designs and limitations, associated with fertilizer placement, is critical."

Rates of applied nitrogen are not a big issue for systems that separate the seed from the fertilizer. Generally these maintain an acceptable seedbed utilization (SBU)* safety factor that is built into the design and operation of the seeder. Problems associated with seed-placed fertilizer can be avoided when seed and fertilizer are separated by at least one or two inches of soil. Nutrients are readily available to the developing crop by precision-placement. Mid-row banding may be required for high rates of nitrogen, especially in the NH3 form.

"The effect of seed-placed N is a very complex issue," adds Heller. "Seedbed moisture can rapidly decline after seeding depending on the equipment used, field conditions including crop residue cover, and the weather. Timely rainfall can improve germination and reduce seedling damage, particularly from urea (46-00). Ammonium nitrate (34-00) appears to be less damaging than urea to cereal grain, allowing for increased rates. Liquid nitrogen (28-00) performs well in direct seeding systems. It is generally accepted that anhydrous ammonia (NH3) is desirable for its cheaper cost per unit of N, but cannot be placed with the seed."

Safe rates of seed-placed N for direct seeding will generally be determined by a grower's experience and skill. Row width and spacing achieved with ground openers is the important factor. SBU charts, available from many sources, are helpful as a guideline but need to be carefully interpreted for fertilizer, soil, and crop variations.

"Experienced direct seeders can usually answer most fertilizer placement questions," says Heller. "As a reduced tillage agronomist, I face the very real challenge of translating soil fertility research studies for novice direct seeders. My preference is to match them up with experienced growers."

A 1997 Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute (PAMI) publication – ***Research Update 731 - Don't Gamble with Fertilizer Rates*** – provides some guidelines for safe seed-placed nitrogen that farmers can think about when planning to direct seed for the first time this spring:

- **rates** - the chance for crop injury increases with higher rates of N
- **soil texture** - the sandier the soil texture, the bigger the risk for emergence damage and yield loss
- **seedbed moisture conditions at seeding** - the lower the moisture, the higher the risk. Canola may be an exception. For dry soils, reduce N rates by 50 per cent
- **row spacing** - the wider apart the rows, the greater the risk
- **width of spread** - the less spread, the more risk
- **crop type** - at a given rate of N, smaller seeds are more subject to injury. Peas and lentils are very sensitive to seed-placed N
- **organic matter** - higher levels of organic matter in the soil lessen risk (i.e.: eroded knolls may show greater damage from seed-placed fertilizer)

This same article points out an important farm-tip gleaned from the agronomic studies- emergence results do not support yield results in every case. Unusual growing conditions may confound the study (i.e.: a longer growing season may allow late maturing treatments to recover from early seedling damage).

"Observation of plant emergence and early crop development provides useful information," continues Heller. "Don't miss the opportunity to visit fields soon after seeding. Do some plant counts and some digging to examine roots and shoots. Look for crop injury and response that suggest an adjustment to fertilizer application. Because farmers traditionally use yield alone to measure the success of new cropping practices, caution must be taken with one-time assessments of fertilizer placement."

With all this in mind, growers must avoid basic agronomic mistakes that only intensify seedling stress and the likelihood of fertilizer impairments. The list includes deep seeding, cloddy furrows and soil crusting, poor quality seed, weed competition, herbicide residue, and worn-out openers.

* SBU is a mathematical calculation of the amount (per cent) of space in the field over which fertilizer is spread thus reflecting the relative concentration of seedbed fertilizer. The lower the seedbed utilization (SBU), the greater the risk for fertilizer harm (or the higher the SBU, the more fertilizer that can be placed safely with the seed). Check this web-link on how SBU charts can be used:

<http://www.agr.gov.sk.ca/DOCS/crops/integrated_pest_management/soil_fertility_fertilizers/Revguide01.asp>.

For more information about fertilizer placement, direct seeding, or terms and references in this article, contact Heller at (780) 853-8262, fax (780) 853-4776, e-mail <ron.heller@gov.ab.ca> or write to Box 18, 4701-52 St., Vermilion, AB T9X 1J9.

*Contact:* *Ron Heller*
*(780) 853-8262*

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# Rethinking summerfallow

A couple of very dry years and low snowfall this winter has increased the risk of continuous cropping in the drier areas of Alberta. Summerfallow has been used as a risk management tool for many years, but sometimes with disastrous results. Conventional summerfallow using cultivation leaves soils vulnerable to wind and water erosion, especially when there is not much stubble to start with. It may also contribute to salinity.

"Chem-fallow is a viable option to consider and helps prevent erosion. Cultivation, often thought of as the cheapest way to summerfallow, costs more than the fuel your tractor uses," says Peter Gamache, manager of RT LINKAGES program, Edmonton. "Wear and tear on equipment, extra time, depreciation and idle land cost money. The typical cost of ownership and operating for a tillage operation is about $5 per acre. The option of chem-fallow has more up-front costs for herbicides. The spraying operation usually costs less, takes less time and involves fewer passes than tillage."

There are a number of other costs and risks associated with tillage summerfallow. The risk of erosion isn't often considered, nor is the cost of moisture loss and the release of carbon dioxide - CO2, a greenhouse gas issue. Organic matter levels decline under tillage fallow systems, so the fertility level of the soil decreases, as do factors such as water holding capacity, infiltration and structure.

Cover crops or greenfallowing is an alternative to tillage or chemical fallow. The typical summerfallow period is up to 20 months. It is possible to shorten the fallow period by seeding an annual legume. Peas, Indian Head lentils, or chickling vetch (AC Greenfix) are being grown as greenfallow. The crop is terminated early in the season by silaging, haying, or spraying. This method helps the soil gain some organic matter and nitrogen and protects it from erosion while still leaving time to gain soil moisture. Bob Blackshaw of the Lethbridge Research Centre has found more spring moisture in the Brown soil areas after a cover crop than after fallow. That may be due to standing stubble that slows wind speed, decreases evaporation and traps snow. Building a surface mulch also reduces evaporation.

"Soils typically hold up to two inches of available water per foot or about eight inches in the top four feet," adds Gamache. "Average precipitation, even in the dry south, is greater than eight inches, although farmers would have loved to see that much in the last couple of years. Additional moisture either saturates the soil, runs off or leaches out. The greenfallow prevents this and still gives the period from harvest through to the next spring for accumulating moisture in the soil profile. The key is early termination of the crop and standing anchored residue."

Tillage wastes water, reduces organic matter and destroys surface mulch. Chem-fallow is a better option, but it too can waste water during average precipitation years. Cover crops or greenfallowing help prevent erosion, provide a return and maintains or builds organic matter.

*Contact:* *Peter Gamache*
*(780) 422-7922*

# Alberta Agriculture releases new field pea cultivar

A new yellow-cotyledon field pea cultivar was recommended for registration in Winnipeg in February 2002. The Prairie Registration Recommending Committee for Grain gave unanimous support to SB2000-2. The candidate cultivar was selected by plant breeder Dr. Stan Blade, who currently serves as the director of the Crop Diversification Division with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton.

"Our breeding objective was to identify and release superior genetic material with increased yield, improved disease resistance and good quality characteristics," says Blade. "SB2000-2 was the top performer in the 2001 Field Pea Cooperative Registration Test."

The annual Cooperative Test is a third-party trial located at several sites across western Canada to test all of the potential new pea cultivars being developed by North American and European breeding programs.

"SB2000-2 yielded 10 per cent higher than the other check cultivars in two years of testing. This is a significant improvement in yield potential when compared to existing commercial pea cultivars," adds Blade.

In addition to excellent yield, the Cooperative also tested for disease resistance. SB2000-2 has shown complete resistance to powdery mildew, a disease that can cause substantial yield reductions in Alberta. The candidate cultivar has also been identified as being resistant to Fusarium wilt (Race 1). Cooking quality tests indicated superior viscosity and granulation-characteristics that are important in some of Alberta's major export markets.

The new cultivar will be released under the existing agreement between Alberta Agriculture, the Crop Development Centre (University of Saskatchewan), the Saskatchewan Pulse Crop Development Board and the Alberta Pulse Growers. The Alberta Pulse Growers provided significant support to Blade's research program, which led to the selection of the high-yielding SB2000-2.

*Contact:* *Dr. Stan Blade*
*(780) 415-2311*

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## Growing rural tourism

Over 250 delegates attended the second rural tourism conference in Camrose in February 2002. Delegates included representatives from municipal and provincial government, chambers of commerce, economic development officers, Travel Alberta, facilities, attractions, museums, hotels, bed & breakfasts, and festivals.

The second keynote speaker, Dr. Ted Manning, associate director for the Centre for a Sustainable Future, focused on ***Planning and Marketing the Tourism You Want***.

Manning segmented tourists into the following categories:

- long distance visitors - seek something unique (the "best") and invest considerable time and money in getting there. Not easily distracted from their target destination
- regional tourists - visitors attracted by a mix of experiences or by linked stops and routes
- weekenders - visitors from near urban communities seeking contrast to their own community, usually target events and recreational opportunities
- day tourists - visitors limited to distance of one to two hours from home, usually focused on specific experiences such as shopping, recreation, dining or event
- passer-by tourists - visitors' en route from one place to another. Time restricted but may be enticed by special goods or services - e.g., pottery, cheeses, local preserves
- niche tourists - visitors' range from birdwatchers to antique hunters, history buffs, food tourists, collectors of folk songs. They are usually very specific in their interest(s)

Manning concluded that in order for tourism to be a strong element in development, you must first seek solutions that benefit both the local community and the industry. In addition, you must integrate tourism planning with community and regional planning and sustain the things that are most important.

Derek Coke-Kerr, managing director for Travel Alberta, in his talk titled ***Keeping Good Things Growing: Moving Tourism Throughout Alberta*** reported that tourism is growing better in rural Alberta than anywhere in the province. Coke-Kerr also announced a partnership with Travel Alberta, Alberta Economic Development Tourism Development Branch and Alberta Agriculture to develop a new positioning program for rural tourism in Alberta that will have a strong agri-tourism focus. More details will be available as the program develops over the next few months. In addition, Travel Alberta will also be hosting 13 half-day marketing workshops in April throughout the province to introduce its people, programs and plans. More information can be found on <www.tourismtogether.com>.

Judy Schultz, Edmonton Journal feature writer and a Rural Tourism Profile speaker encouraged conference attendees to be creative in their pursuits of Rural Culinary Tourism. Cultural icons such as the perogy, egg and sausage are all culinary symbols that can be used to sell the sizzle of rural Alberta. There are a number of ways for tourists to eat, shop and be entertained, as demonstrated by the *Rattlesnake Round-up*, an event that attracts 100,000 people to Little Sweetwater, a small town in Texas.

The ***2002 Alberta Fairs and Rural Tourism*** publication (Agdex 007-1) was just recently published. The publication provides information on Alberta fairs, events and rural tourism businesses. To obtain a copy, call Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office at (780) 427-0391.

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*Rural development specialist-business*
*Alberta Agriculture*
*(403) 340-5369*

## Organic not just a niche market anymore

Mainstream markets often look to the niche markets for innovation while niche markets hope to attract those from the mainstream in order to grow. This relationship is already seen in the organic and natural markets. As the organic consumer is becoming more mainstream, so are the trends as they overlap with those of the mass food market.

"Trends such as healthier, convenient, premium quality and comfort foods are large drivers in both markets," says Rosalie Cunningham, organic specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "These factors are becoming just as important in the organic and natural growth as the traditional organic consumer's environmental motives. In fact, the whole organic and natural market itself is a response to the mainstream trend of better-for-you or healthier foods."

These markets are not particularly well defined or understood. Natural and organic are often used synonymously. Natural refers to those products that do not have any added, nutrients, flavouring agents, incidental additives, contaminants or food additives. Organic is food grown under a production system that promotes soil health, biodiversity, low stress management of animals and sound environmental practices without the use of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, growth regulators and livestock feed additives.

"Because these two types of products are not well defined, the figures for these markets are often combined," adds Cunningham. "Also, in Canada particularly, these markets are not well tracked. The Canadian 2001 organic retail market is estimated to be approximately $650 million, the combined natural and organic around $1.4 billion. These figures represent only one per cent and two per cent of the mass food market, respectively."

*Cont'd on page 6*

However, these markets are surprisingly similar to the mass market in terms of general structure with the exception of two categories: (1) meat, fish, poultry and (2) fruits and vegetables. Of the eight categories defined, meat represents 21 per cent and the largest portion of the mass market. But in the organic market it is the smallest portion at only one per cent and in the combined natural and organic market five per cent, and the third smallest portion. The natural and organic markets reflect their vegetarian roots - particularly evident in the organic market where fruits and vegetables make up 41 per cent of that market. The remaining six categories hold roughly the same ranking and close to the same percentage regardless of which market - mass, natural or organic. The niche markets reflect the mainstream.

As the mainstream consumer trends increasingly show up in the organic and natural markets there are some categories to watch. Ones that can combine health and wellness drivers with other strong consumer trends have a good recipe for growth. The organic version has the advantage of being thought of as healthier. Organic packaged foods can capitalize on the need for convenience and depending on the product can be a comfort food as well. Organic bread can be a comfort food as well as a premium quality food or specialty.

"Convenience, comfort, premium quality and specialty - four mainstream consumer trends that the niche markets can and are mining for their growth," says Cunningham.

For more information on this upcoming report and for the results from the Third Annual Growing Organic Conference, check the on-line organic link at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/navigation/food/consumer/index.html>.

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# Agri-News Briefs

## Farm Operations Cost Guide

The Farm Operations Cost Guide, a publication that provides average price information for machinery and custom work based on annually surveyed custom rates, rental rates and new costs of farm machinery, is now available. The publication is arranged in three parts. The first part gives a summary of custom work and rental rates during 2001. The rates included in the publication are intended as a guide and are not meant to represent absolute rates producers may be charged. The second part of the publication is a listing of prices for some of the more common inputs. The information is also based on prices gathered throughout 2001 and intended as an average cost farmers and custom operators can use when figuring out production costs for the coming year. The third part of the publication is a farm machinery cost guide that provides information on the cost of owning and operating farm machinery. Technical information such as machinery prices, repair rates, performance, capacity, fuel consumption and fuel prices can be used to calculate approximate fixed and variable costs. The costs used in the publication are based on new machinery prices as of December 1, 2001. The publications also includes worksheets and tables that can be used when calculating the costs for an individual farm operation. The price of the Farm Operations Cost Guide is $5 plus GST (please add $2 plus GST for shipping and handling). Copies of are available from Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office by calling (780) 427-0391 or toll free in Alberta at 1-800-292-5697. For more information on how to calculate costs, an on-line Machinery Cost Calculator is also available on Alberta Agriculture's web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/machcost>.

## Storing cheese properly

When it comes to storing cheese, it's the moisture content that affects the product's shelf life. The lower the humidity, the longer it can be stored. It's always advisable to check the 'best-before' date on packages of perishable foods before buying. For cheese, the following chart gives approximate storage life for five different cheese categories.

| **Category** | **Moisture** | **Storage Life (1°C - 3°C)** |
|---|---|---|
| Fresh cheese | 60% to 80% | 2 weeks to 2 months |
| Soft cheese | 50% to 60% | 1 to 2 months |
| Semi-soft cheese | 40% to 60% | 2 to 4 months |
| Firm cheese | 35% to 45% | 3 months to over a year |
| Hard cheese | 25% to 35% | 1 to 5 years |

To keep mould from forming on semi-soft, firm or hard cheese after opening the package, wipe the surface of the cheese with a paper towel to remove excess moisture then seal tightly in plastic wrap or aluminum foil. For further information, contact Alberta Milk at (780) 453-5942, toll free in Alberta at 1-800-252-7530 or visit the Alberta Milk web site at <www.albertamilk.com>.

# Agri-News

April 8, 2002

## CWD confirmed in Alberta

On March 26, 2002, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) confirmed Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in a farmed elk in Alberta. The brain from this animal was obtained as part of an ongoing voluntary surveillance program for CWD, which is a joint initiative among Agri-Food Surveillance Systems Branch, Livestock Diversification Branch and the Alberta cervid industry.

"CWD is a reportable disease under the federal Health of Animals Act, giving the CFIA authority to control any occurrences," says Dr. Gerald Ollis, head of Agri-Food Surveillance Systems Branch with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "The CFIA has quarantined the affected elk farm and is working closely with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development to complete trace outs of animals from this farm. Federal compensation is provided to livestock owners for any animals that are destroyed to control the disease."

CWD is a progressive, fatal, degenerative disease of the central nervous system affecting elk, mule deer and white-tailed deer. CWD belongs to a group of related diseases called Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSE's), which includes diseases such as Scrapie in sheep and goats, Bovine Spongiform Enecphalopathy (BSE) in cattle and Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD) in humans. TSE's are caused by abnormal proteins, called prions. There is currently no scientific evidence to suggest that CWD is naturally transmissible to humans or livestock.

Elk and deer with CWD may not show any visible symptoms of the disease for several years. Eventually, as the disease progresses, animals may exhibit loss of condition, excessive salivation, trouble swallowing, difficulty in judging distance, incoordination and drooping ears. These symptoms are not specific to CWD and can occur with other diseases as well. The only valid method to diagnose CWD is by examining the brain tissue after the animal has died. Specialized immunohistochemistry (IHC) staining is the universally accepted method of detection and is performed in the Agri-Food Surveillance Systems Branch laboratory, with confirmation by CFIA.

"CWD can pass from one animal to another and females can pass it to their offspring, but the exact mode of spread has not been identified," says Ollis. "Experimental and circumstantial evidence suggests infected deer and elk probably transmit the disease through animal-to-animal contact or contamination of feed or water sources with saliva, urine and/or feces. Under certain circumstances, a heavily contaminated environment can be a source of infection.

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

"The disease seems more likely to occur in areas where deer or elk are crowded or where they congregate at man-made feed and water stations. Artificial feeding of deer and elk may compound the problem."

CWD was confirmed in over 200 farmed elk and two wild mule deer in Saskatchewan since 2000. To control the spread of the disease, the CFIA has depopulated 7,782 farmed elk as of March 22, 2002. Owners of destroyed animals were eligible for compensation under the provisions of the federal *Health of Animals Act*.

Alberta has had a moratorium on importing domestic elk and deer since 1988. Since the autumn of 1996, Alberta has conducted CWD surveillance on farmed and wild elk and deer in the province. As of March 25, 2002, 3,890 animals had revealed no evidence of CWD. In the spring of 2001, Alberta Sustainable Resources Development conducted a sampling of 199 deer in a 20-km wide swatch along the Alberta side of the Alberta-Saskatchewan border south of Lloydminster. In addition, in the autumn of 2000 and 2001, surveillance of wild elk and deer was enhanced in wildlife management areas along Alberta's eastern border. All results have been negative for CWD.

For further information about CWD, call Alberta Agriculture's Publication Office at 1-800-292-5697 for a copy of the ***Chronic Wasting Disease of Elk and Deer*** factsheet (Agdex #FS 663-43), or consult the following websites:

CFIA - http://www.inspection.gc.ca/
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development - http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agdex/600/663-43.html
Agri-Food Surveillance Systems Branch - http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/surveillance/tse/index.html

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## DroughtNet launched

The Alberta Drought Monitoring Program (DroughtNet) is a new federal/provincial partnership that will help monitor and evaluate drought conditions across Alberta under a first-of-its-kind provincial program.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) will contribute $500,000 from the Rural Water Development Program towards the $1.7 million cost of DroughtNet. This additional funding will complement the $1.2 million already committed by Alberta and will allow the purchase and installation of 34 weather monitoring stations.

"I'm pleased the Government of Canada could help Alberta launch this important project," Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Lyle Vanclief commented. "Helping farmers use all the new technology available to help avoid the effects of severe drought conditions is one of our most important goals."

Alberta Deputy Premier and Agriculture, Food and Rural Development Minister Shirley McClellan said DroughtNet will help the province and municipalities identify areas that are more prone to drought conditions. "The information will help establish drought trends and patterns and should allow us to assist farmers to better manage the impact of drought on their operations, especially in high-risk areas," she said.

DroughtNet was created by the Alberta government through the work of the Agriculture Drought Risk Management Committee, of which AAFC's Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration is a key player. A component of that plan was the establishment of a drought monitoring network in Alberta. The network of 34 stations, which will be completed by next April, will enhance the existing weather network and monitor daily near real-time climate and soil moisture data for reporting the location, extent and severity of drought. The reports will provide essential information for making decisions on drought responses and enable government officials and stakeholders to assess the drought situation more accurately. Alberta is the first province to develop this type of structured process for monitoring, reporting and addressing drought conditions.

In December, the Government of Canada announced $1.2 million in additional funding for the Rural Water Development Program in Alberta to support strategic initiatives to reduce the risk of future water shortages in the province. The $500,000 allocation for DroughtNet is funded by that program.

Helping producers in managing business risks is one of the key elements of the Agricultural Policy Framework, agreed to in principle by Canada's agriculture ministers last June. The Framework aims to brand Canada as the world leader in science and innovation, food safety and quality, environmental stewardship, renewal and business risk management.

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## Weather affects economic use of fertilizer

Crop production decisions depend to a great extent on anticipation of the weather. There may be no such thing as a normal season, but farmers are very aware of patterns that appear most often in their area. There is no single crop production decision more dependent on weather than a fertilizer program.

"When planning a fertilizer program, the first criterion is usually one of economics, fertilizer has to boost the value of crop production more than the cost of the fertilizer," says Ron Hockridge, crop specialist and financial business analyst with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "To this end, many years of research have produced data to show what response can be expected from different levels of fertilizer most years. An expected price is simply attach to estimate the crop worth and the cost per unit of fertilizer to calculate where the best level of fertility is likely to be. Producers usually have to back off from this level somewhat to allow for fluctuations and other limitations that occur on each field."

To limit the fluctuations in response, the farmer may take some steps to make more efficient use of fertilizer. Banding slows down the reaction of some of the nutrients with the soil and keeps them available for plant use longer. If you can place the fertilizer where the crop can readily access it, you get an added benefit. Studies have shown that the best placement is slightly below the seed and to the side. To achieve this, a machine is required that has enough sophistication to do the job. There is also a cost associated with the power needed to get everything in the ground.

"In areas where moisture is adequate, other factors may outweigh the advantages of banding," adds Hockridge. "Crops germinate quickly and are able to take advantage of fertilizer that is dissolved in soil water. There are normally time and energy savings to broadcasting seed and fertilizer on the surface and lightly working it in. There may be more gain from early seeding than loss from lower fertilizer efficiency. It may be possible to farm more acres and maximize returns on a whole farm basis. Under good conditions, the fertilizer application program will likely be quite different than when it's less than desirable."

These are all short-term economic decisions. Farmers need to look at the long-term viability of their farms as well. When land has been run down from years of abuse, the soil doesn't respond as well to fertilizer applications. It may be the result of soil structure breakdown from over tillage or organic matter depletion. It can be an imbalance of nutrients causing some elements to be limited. It could also be strong affinity of the soil for a particular nutrient that keeps that nutrient from being available to plants. It all boils down to management of the soil to keep it healthy over time.

At FarmTech 2002, a farmer from Chile described what he does to keep his soil healthy. By the time this farmer finished his talk, it was apparent that Chilean farmers deal with a very different set of circumstances, different rainfall and different temperatures than Alberta farmers. However, it was evident that the same fertilizer principles are used, but decisions are based on very different weather expectations.

For further information, or to be put in touch with an Alberta Agriculture financial business analyst, call Alberta Agriculture's Call Centre toll free at 1-866-882-7677.

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## $1.5 million livestock welfare research funding agreement

A new Alberta-Canada Livestock Welfare Research Partnership (ACLWRP) to support new research based at the federal Lacombe Research Centre was announced in Edmonton on March 27, 2002. The two governments are partners in the project along with Alberta Farm Animal Care Association (AFAC).

"This partnership is a great example of cooperation in research and promotion of animal health and well-being," says Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Lyle Vanclief. "Successful partnerships such as the ACLWRP will help us brand Canada as the world leader in environmentally-responsible production, innovation and food safety."

"Animal welfare is a priority in the province," says and Alberta's Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development Shirley McClellan. "We already have a high standard of farm animal care plus one of the strongest pieces of legislation in Canada, *the Animal Protection Act*. However, it is important to more fully understand factors influencing livestock welfare and to implement proactive changes based on sound science. Both the industry and consumers will benefit from this new research."

Four research categories have been identified for study under the partnership: husbandry practices, disease, non-invasive procedures for measuring stress, and environment. Scientists will evaluate such areas as transport, handling, early detection of sick animals and reduced use of antibiotics; and livestock housing.

AFAC chair Guy Fontaine says animal welfare is an integral component of today's livestock industry. "We know that proper animal handling is directly linked to improved productivity, meat quality and producer profitability. The more we know about animal behavior, the better it is for the animals and the industry. Some major retailers and fast food players now require animal welfare protocols from suppliers. Alberta's livestock industry will be required to meet these science-based protocols in the future. We are pleased to be partners in this program and to provide industry input," adds Fontaine.

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Initial contributions to the partnership from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Alberta Agriculture, and AFAC are $1.5 million over the next three years. The in-kind and cash funding will be allocated toward such areas as research, scientists, technicians, laboratory equipment and operations and extension support. The program will not duplicate research being conducted at other research establishments except where needed to evaluate technologies for Alberta conditions. The partnership will be looking to cooperate with other researchers involved in livestock welfare research around the world.

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# Two farm water programs extended to allow greater participation

Two farm water program extensions will make it easier for producers to develop and maintain water supplies and infrastructure.

"Securing long-term water supplies is an important strategy for producers to protect their operations from drought conditions," says Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "That's why we're extending the deadline for the Alberta Farm Water Program and reducing the rental rates for pumping equipment for the third year in a row."

The deadline for producers to complete long-term water supply projects on their farms for the Alberta Farm Water Program (AFWP) has been extended to November 30, 2002.

Last year, producers in some parts of the province experienced the worst drought in more than 130 years, adds McClellan, and some areas of the province experienced a third consecutive year of drought. Winter precipitation levels remained well below normal in most areas of the province, prompting concerns that producers could face another year of drought conditions.

"Both programs were well received by producers, but winter conditions didn't allow many producers to complete their water supply projects," says McClellan. Project contractors continue to be in high demand, creating long waiting lists for water supply projects. The AFWP extended deadline should ensure that all producers have the opportunity to benefit from these programs.

AFWP will pay for one-third of development costs, to a maximum of $5,000 per producer, for eligible water supply projects. Farmers will need to apply for this program. Projects will now need to be completed by November 30, 2002 and the deadline for submitting applications for the AFWP will be January 31, 2003.

Producers who apply after April 2, 2002 for the AFWP will need to fill out a revised application form (Version 5), available in early April in AAFRD hub offices, by calling the Rural Services Division at 422-9167 (toll free by calling 310-0000), through the AAFRD website (www.agric.gov.ab.ca/farmwater) or through MLA offices.

Through the Water Pumping Program, AAFRD is again able to offer water pumping equipment at a reduced rate. This equipment can be used to fill dugouts from local water sources. Producers who are experiencing water shortages for livestock and domestic use will have priority for equipment use. Last year, 1,354 individual clients pumped an estimated 2.5-million cubic meters of water.

To obtain information and application forms for the Water Pumping Program, producers can call toll free by dialing 310-0000 and ask to be connected to (780) 422-5000, effective April 2, 2002. Information is also available on the AAFRD website at www.agric.gov.ab.ca and by clicking on Engineering - Water. Applications for the Water Pumping Program are also available though the AAFRD hub offices and Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC) offices, located throughout Alberta. AFSC will courier producers' applications with deposit to the Edmonton AAFRD office to reserve access to equipment.

For further information, including rental rates, or to apply for the use of water pumping equipment, Alberta producers can call (780) 422-5000, effective April 2, 2002, or producers can contact any of the following Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development Water Pumping Program dispatch locations. An agricultural water specialist can also be contacted through these offices to provide recommendations on constructing or maintaining a safe and secure water supply. For toll free information outside of Edmonton, dial 310-0000.

**Water Pumping Program dispatch locations**:

J.G. O'Donoghue Building
Technical Services Division
Edmonton, AB
T6H 5T6
(780) 422-5000

Agricultural Technology Centre
2210-30th Ave. South
Lethbridge, AB
T1K 1L6
(403) 381-5730
Fax: (403) 328-5562

*Cont'd on page 5*

Provincial Building
Box 159, 10209 - 109 St.
Fairview, AB T0H 1L0
(780) 835-2291
Fax: (780) 835-3600

Provincial Building
Box 4560, 6203 - 49 St.
Barrhead, AB T7N 1A4
(780) 674-8260
Fax: (780) 674-8309

*Contact:* ***Alberta Farm Water Program***
*Lloyd Andruchow/John Knapp*
*Rural Services Division - Alberta Agriculture*
*(780) 422-9167*

***Water Pumping Program***
*Murray Tenove*
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*Alberta Agriculture*
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# Seeding depths and rates in direct seeding systems

It is true that direct seeding conserves moisture and direct seeded fields are cooler than cultivated fields. There are some who assume from these pieces of information that their land will not allow reduction or elimination of tillage. A greater understanding of direct seeding practices has resulted in a significant area in western Canada that is now direct seeded or zero tilled.

"Neither of the above statements tell the whole story about moisture and soil temperature in direct seeding, even together they don't," says Nick Underwood P.Ag. Reduced Tillage LINKAGES agronomist, Peace Region. "We can, however, add to the information in those two simple statements and use them to our advantage when deciding about seeding rates and seeding depth. The same thought process helps to encourage the producers who don't direct seed to look again at reduced tillage."

There is moisture conservation associated with direct seeding, and there are three main reasons for that:

- stubble traps snow
- residue cover reduces evapouration losses
- stubble and residue together reduce surface run off and evaporation.

"Conventional tillage farmers may argue that their heavy clay ground is flat and cultivating is necessary so that the soil is dry enough to seed and warm enough for germination," says Underwood. "The question then is, if cultivation is done, presumably harrowing, what is the seeding depth for wheat or canola? It is probably 1.5 inches or more for wheat, and 1.0 inches for canola. The direct-seeder will probably seed wheat at 1.0 inches and canola at 0.5 inches. These depths may be slightly less in moist clay soils."

Seeding depth is defined as the distance from the seed to the soil surface immediately above it, after the last implement passes over the planted field.

"When it comes to soil temperature, statements are based on measurements that have been taken," adds Underwood. "These measurements are taken at two inches. At that depth, direct seeded fields range from being 0 to 3.0 degrees C. cooler than conventional fields. In the top one inch, the difference is less, of course. Cultivated land is warmer than residue covered land at the soil surface on sunny days, and the diurnal range is greater. The important point is that the difference in temperature is not great at the depth to which the seed is placed in the different systems. Direct seeding at a shallower depth can offset much of the heat advantage that tilled land has at 2.0 inches."

Whatever seeding system is being used, the job of the seeding implement and its ground openers, is to place the seed into moist soil where it is surrounded by soil particles small enough to reduce the open spaces in the seedbed. There should be good seed to soil contact, and that is one of the jobs of the packer. The on row packer reduces the seeding depth while it is firming the soil.

"Narrow single shoot openers provide the best seed placement," says Underwood. "It is easier to consistently achieve the desired seeding depth with this equipment. However, you are limited to the amount of fertilizer that can be placed with the seed."

Sometimes people ask if seeding rates should change when you switch to direct seeding. The short answer is no, but there are two reasons why it might be wise to increase the seeding rates:

- The seeder used to direct seed may have much wider row spacing than the old conventional seed drill. This will result in a higher number of seeds per row at a given seeding rate. In drier areas the increased moisture conservation of direct seeding will increase the production potential compared to a tillage system. This potential may result in a longer growing period while the crop responds to the additional soil moisture. Increasing seeding rates by 10 to 20 per cent can also capture this potential. Maturity should not be delayed. The effectiveness of this will depend on what present seeding rates are, and the moisture conditions in the area.
- Weed control in direct seeding is not done by tillage, but depends on timely application of herbicides. To prevent the herbicide costs from increasing, adopt other tactics to control weeds such as rotation, competitive varieties, and increased seeding rates. Drs. Neil Harker and John O'Donovan have done very useful work in this area.

For more information, call Alberta Agriculture's Publication Office 1-800-292-5697 for the factsheet ***Seed Row Spacing and Seeding Ratio in Direct Seeding*** (Agdex #FS 519-22) or consult the Alberta Agriculture web site <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agdex/500/519-22.html>.

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# Agri-News Briefs

## NAERIC Horse Summit 2002

The North American Equine Ranching Information Council (NAERIC) is holding a three-day conference for the prairie horse industry at the Keystone Centre, Brandon, Manitoba on April 12 to 14, 2002. The conference features internationally respected speakers on marketing and promotion, a horse industry panel discussion, the annual horse and tack sale, the Stallion Avenue Exhibition, a trade show exhibition, an adult horsemanship skills clinic and a free youth extravaganza. For further information on registration, contact Marnie Somers, NAERIC Horse Summit 2002 coordinator, Box 1122, Carberry, MB R0K 0H0, phone (204) 834-2479, or e-mail <marnie@horsescoops.com>.

## E-commerce in Canada

An internet site that outlines the various initiatives that are helping make Canada a world leader in the adoption and use of electronic commerce is the virtual focal point for information on Canada's Electronic Commerce Strategy. Working with the private sector, the federal government concentrated on creating a favourable environment in areas that are critical to the rapid development of e-commerce. The site should help answer many of your ecom related questions, such as:

- What is Electronic Commerce?
- How can my business benefit from E-Com?
- What is the federal government's role in E-com?
- Where can I find the latest information on E-com developments?
- What is The Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act?

Anyone interested in e-commerce is encouraged to visit the site at <http://ecom.ic.gc.ca/english/index.html>.

## Sister-province photo exhibit

Alberta International and Intergovernmental Relations is presenting a unique Chinese photo exhibit called ***Here is Heilongjiang*** in the Legislature Pedway, north of the Legislature Building, 10800 - 97 Avenue, Edmonton. The exhibit commemorates the 20th anniversary of Alberta's sister-province relationship with Heilongjiang, China. The exhibit was donated to Alberta by the Government of Heilongjiang. The colourful, striking photos highlight the character of Heilongjiang's landscapes, natural resources and economy, aptly demonstrating the many similarities between Alberta and Heilongjiang. Albertans are encouraged to visit the exhibit which will be in the Legislature Pedway for the next six months. More information about the exhibit, including photos, is available at: <www.iir.gov.ab.ca/inter_rel/pages/exhibit.htm>.

Agri-News

April 15, 2002

## Drought conditions continue on the prairies

The continuation of drought conditions across most of the prairies this spring is expected to deplete most surface water supplies and some shallow groundwater supplies. The main reason is the lack of precipitation over the last two years and the cumulative effect it has on farm water supplies. The drought conditions are worst in the eastern and southern parts of Alberta and central and southern Saskatchewan.

A review of the precipitation across the prairies from the fall of 2000 until the end of March 2002 shows the following:

*(Percentage (%) of average precipitation – source Agriculture and Agri-food Canada)*

*Drought Watch Maps*

- **Fall 2000** - Sept 1 to Oct 31
  Alta - 75%
  Sask - 75%
  Man - average
- **Winter 2001** - Nov 1 to Mar 31
  Alta - 50%
  Sask - 65%
  Man - 80%
- **Summer 2001** - April 1 to August 31
  Alta - 65%
  Sask - 75%
  Man - average
- **Fall 2001 and Winter 2002** - Sept 1/2001 to March 31/2002
  Alta - 50%
  Sask - 60%
  Man - 70%

"As you can see from this data, taken from the maps provided on the ***Drought Watch*** site, winter precipitation especially has been very low for the past two winters," says Bob Buchannan, agricultural water specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Leduc. "A combination of this plus dry falls and lower summer precipitation has resulted in a cumulative effect and further depletion of surface water supplies, especially.

In most parts of Alberta and Saskatchewan, farm dugout water levels ranged from dry to one-quarter full late last fall. Also, very little or no runoff is expected this spring in these areas because of the lack of snowfall and extremely dry soil moisture conditions. What little snow exists will help soil moisture, but

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will do nothing to improve water supplies. The low precipitation is also expected to deplete some of the shallower wells, less than 50 feet deep. These wells often rely heavily on a combination of snowmelt followed by early summer rainfall to infiltrate past the crop root zone and recharge these aquifers. Once field crops are established and growing, almost all the rainfall that comes is captured in the root zone and used by crops. It usually takes some very heavy and extended rainfalls to recharge groundwater."

### What to do to drought proof your farm water supply?

To improve the supply of water on your farm, start by doing an inventory of all your current water sources and how much water they can supply. Then subtract the farm water requirements from this total to determine what water shortages or water problems exist. Then the next step is to identify a combination of short- and long-term solutions to address the water problems.

"In Alberta, where the surface water situation does not look good for most of the year, many producers are shifting from dugouts to wells and shallow buried pipelines to supply water to their pastures," adds Buchanan. "For producers who have pastures within a mile or two of home, the least costly alternative is to use the existing well and pressure system to supply water via pipeline to the pastures. In some cases, new wells are being drilled at home to supplement the farmyard supply and also supply pastures away from the farmyard. For pastures further away from home where surface supplies are low or dry, many producers are drilling new wells or re-using old wells that still exist on some of the abandoned farm sites."

Although the initial costs for new wells is higher, they can be strategically placed and, with the addition of pipelines, supply many sections of land with water for livestock. Although mainline power is the best option for pumping water if its readily available, there are reliable automated gas powered generator systems, plus solar and wind powered options that are being used for pumping water. The main principle here is to develop a dependable well water supply and then make maximum use of it with a pressurized pipeline system.

Provincial water specialists also have access to a wide range of surface and groundwater information, including manuals. For more information on drought proofing your farm water supply, call the Alberta Ag-Info Centre at 1-866-882-7677 to contact a provincial water specialist in your area.

The Alberta Agriculture web site has a series of water articles written in 2001 on this topic. A video, ***Water Wells that Last*** is available from Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6. VISA and MasterCard orders can be placed by calling toll free 1-800-292-5697. The shipping and handling cost per order is $2, plus GST.

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## Saving spring soil moisture – Making the most of standing stubble

Every tillage pass contributes to losses in soil moisture. Tillage turns the earth, exposing bare soil to the elements and unprotected soil, soil that has no ground cover such as stubble, is more susceptible to moisture losses. Soil is especially susceptible to moisture loss by combinations of warm air temperatures, radiant heat and wind speed at the soil surface.

"Undisturbed land has dramatically greater water infiltration rates and is therefore better able to take advantage of spring rains and save the moisture," says Rick Taillieu, Reduced Tillage LINKAGES, Olds. "The anchored stubble from the previous year acts as a series of shelterbelts and significantly reduces wind speed at the soil surface. This not only protects soil moisture before seeding, but also reduces seedbed drying after direct seeding."

Standing stubble also provides a shading effect on the soil surface, which can further protect soil moisture from evaporation caused by direct sunlight. Below the surface, anchored stubble has undisturbed infiltration pathways created by the decomposition of the plant roots. These small channels allow the soil profile to better absorb water after a significant spring rainfall event.

"After crop emergence, standing stubble protects new seedlings from the wind, which may help to further reduce moisture losses from evapotranspiration in addition to providing protection from blowing soil," adds Taillieu. "Standing stubble significantly reduces the risk associated with pre-emergent rolling, a major cause of spring soil erosion resulting in soil moisture losses."

To save stubble in the spring, it's important to reduce tillage operations. Remember every pass destroys stubble and costs moisture. If possible, fertilize and seed in a single pass. If fertilizer application requires a separate operation, consider a narrow opener to minimize soil disturbance.

Using smaller openers and wider row spacing will reduce Seed Bed Utilization (SBU), which is the percentage of soil surface that is disturbed. It is also important to understand that as SBU decreases, the concentration of seed and fertilizer increases. This is critical in single shoot seeding systems, and safe fertilizer rates are dependent on soil type and conditions. Disturbing as little of the seedbed as possible means more stubble being left anchored and standing.

"On-row packing will help ensure a good seedbed and eliminate the need to harrow after seeding," says Taillieu. "A harrowing operation will dislodge and knock down stubble, compromising its effectiveness in reducing wind speed. Seeding in the same direction as the previous year's stubble rows generally saves the stubble and is easier to seed through. If you are able to 'seed

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between the rows', you will realize the greatest benefits from your stubble. Seeding perpendicular to the prevailing winds will also help ensure that next year's stubble is best able to protect your land."

The more soil disturbance is reduced, the more standing stubble is saved. The combination of these will help conserve spring soil moisture, both before and after seeding. The challenge for all direct seeders is to maximize the benefits of the stubble from last year's crops to help ensure the following crop's success, starting with germination.

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## Key things farmers need to know about fertilizer placement

'Safe' rates of applied fertilizer are not a big issue for seeding systems that adequately separate seed and fertilizer, such as two-pass, double or multi-shoot systems.

"Seed Bed Utilization (SBU) is a mathematical calculation of fertilizer spread and concentration for a one pass, single shoot system, and must be interpreted for variations in soil, crop and fertilizer," says Ron Heller, agronomist with Reduced Tillage LINKAGES, Vermilion. "Soil moisture, temperature, and placement influence fertilizer efficiency and must be factored into the decision. Seed placed nitrogen (N) can be a complex issue, one that producers need to understand to make the best fertilizing decisions possible."

Crop emergence does not always relate to crop yield. Unusual growing conditions can confound seed placed N results from year to year. Rainfall soon after seeding can improve germination and emergence, thus reducing the possible impact of fertilizer injury to seedlings. Seedling stress can be intensified by other basic agronomic mistakes, such as poor quality seed, deep seeding, soil clods and crusting, herbicide residue, worn out openers.

Guidelines for seed placed N:

- Rates – the chance for crop seedling injury increases with higher target N rates
- Soil texture – the sandier the soil, the bigger the risk for emergence damage and yield loss.
- Seedbed moisture – the lower the soil moisture, the higher the risk for placing nitrogen in the vicinity of the seed (canola may be an exception)
- Row spacing – the wider apart the rows, the greater the risk.
- Width of spread – the narrower the ground opener, the greater the risk.
- Crop type – at a given rate of N, smaller seeds are more subject to injury. Peas and lentils are very sensitive to seed placed N.
- Organic matter – higher levels of organic matter in the soil lessen risk. (i.e.: eroded knolls may show greater damage from seed placed fertilizer).

"$H_2$0 and its effect on plant growth, fertilizer efficiency and optimum crop yield is a no-brainer – without it nothing else matters," adds Heller. "Where seedbed moisture is low or weather is conducive to evaporation, when it's hot and windy, a seeding system that saves available soil moisture is a good idea. Direct seeding into standing stubble provides that opportunity.

"However, seedbed moisture can rapidly decline after seeding depending on the equipment used, field conditions, including crop residue cover, and the weather. One-pass seeding when it is dry may require high soil disturbance (in a single shoot system) to achieve safe and adequate distribution of the seed and fertilizer, which may cause further moisture loss."

Since the fate of nitrogen in the soil cannot be generalized and can be a cause for seedling stress, more research for direct seeding (reduced tillage) is required. Caution must be taken with seed placed N fertilizers.

For guidelines to safe rates, phone the Alberta Agriculture Publications Office at 1-800-292-5697 and ask for ***The Alberta Fertilizer Guide*** (Agdex #541-1), or visit these internet sites:

- http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/esb/afmrc/718.html
- http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agdex/500/4100001h.html
- http://www.agr.gov.sk.ca/DOCS/crops/integrated_pest_management/soil_fertility_fertilizers/Revguide01.asp

*Contact: Ron Heller*
*(780) 853-8262*
*Fax: (780) 853-4776*
*E-mail: ron.heller@gov.ab.ca*

## New services delivered in new ways at Alberta Agriculture

Driven by industry demand, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has refocused the kind of advisory services it offers producers and the way it provides them through its Industry Development Sector.

"We will continue to support our primary producers while we add more focus to the business of agriculture, value-added and processing," says Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Alberta Agriculture Minister. "The 2001 Ag Summit clearly showed we need to change in order to grow the agriculture industry to $10 billion in primary production and $20 billion in value-added production by 2010."

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The new Industry Development Sector, which is the third of three AAFRD sectors to reorganize, will include six divisions devoted to business and innovation, processing development, agri-food investment, ag-entrepreneurship, crop diversification and livestock development. These services will be delivered through a network of 18 hub offices and 16 offices co-located with industry partners, as well as 24 points of access.

Previously, Industry Development Sector employees were located in 51 regional offices and in Edmonton.

Brian Rhiness, Assistant Deputy Minister of the Industry Development Sector, says negotiations are continuing to provide points of access in four communities - Drayton Valley, Lac La Biche, Morinville and Coronation - which presently do not have an Industry Development Sector or Ministry presence. As well, a co-location in the eastern part of the province is under consideration.

"Through our restructuring, we have increased access for producers to pick up forms and information. Our employees are still just a phone call way. As well, our specialists will continue to provide on-farm consultations to producers," says Rhiness. "This restructuring has been nearly three years in the making and it will continue to evolve so we can best serve our producers and processors."

The new Alberta Ag-Info Centre, launched April 2, 2002, will provide toll-free telephone access over extended hours to producers anywhere in the province through one number, 1-866-882-7677. It will operate Monday to Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., with extended hours during busy times for producers, such as seeding and harvest. The call centre is in addition to web-based information that continues to grow in popularity with Alberta producers and processors.

"The Alberta Ag-Info Centre will be staffed by resource agents, drawn from the pool of client service representatives from across the province, and a group of crop, beef and forage specialists," adds Rhiness. "The call centre employees are all experienced at handling producer inquiries - from simple production problems to diagnosing complex agricultural issues. And if they don't know the answer, they will be able to direct the caller to any one of the specialists located across the province."

The reorganization will mean a reduction of approximately 145 department employees. Of that number, 36 have chosen the Alberta government's voluntary severance provisions, 109 have been notified of their position abolishment and will choose either a severance package or the position abolishment process that includes job placement services and other forms of support.

*Contact:* *Don Young*
*Chair, Strategic Change*
*Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development*
*(780) 422-2522 or (403) 381-5130*

*Brian Rhiness*
*Assistant Deputy Minister,*
*Industry Development Sector*
*Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development*
*(780) 427-2442*

*Terry Willock*
*Communications*
*Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development*
*(780) 422-7683*

For toll-free information outside of Edmonton, dial 310-0000

## Cold, snowy weather welcome in March

Near normal precipitation and well below normal temperatures were recorded in Alberta during March. March marked the first month since July 2001 that Alberta's agricultural regions recorded a near normal precipitation total. It was also the coldest March on record.

The provincial average precipitation total was 17.7 mm, 88 per cent of the 1971 to 2000 average of 20.1 mm. Regional precipitation totals were between 62 to 121 per cent of the 1971 to 2000 average.

"March began and ended with province-wide winter and spring snowstorms, contributing the majority of March's snowfall," says Shane Chetner, agricultural air issues specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "The western edge of the province reported the most precipitation from the two storms. Above normal precipitation was reported in the central region, while the southern, northwest and Peace regions recorded near normal totals. The northeast region was the only agricultural region to report below normal March precipitation totals."

Across the province, stations in the agricultural regions receive between 7.0 and 34.3 mm of precipitation. Lethbridge reported the highest precipitation total in the agricultural regions for the second month in a row with 34.3 mm or 125 per cent of its 1971 to 2000 average of 27.5 mm.

Alberta's average March temperature of -12.8 degree Celsius was 9.6 degree C below the 1971 to 2000 average of -3.2 degree C. Medicine Hat reported the greatest temperature departure, 12.4 degree C below the March monthly normal of -0.3 degree C.

"The early spring snowstorms combined with a cool spring is helping to keep soil from blowing," adds Chetner. "Cold weather is also needed to delay the spring melt, which will help to reduce runoff and evaporation, and preserve moisture for spring seeding."

*Contact:* *Shane Chetner*
*(780) 427-3615*

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# Rust on geraniums can cause significant crop loss

With the bedding plant season in full swing, some disease problems are being encountered by growers. Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, greenhouse crops specialist, Crop Diversification Centre North, Edmonton, advises that rust on geraniums is one disease to keep a sharp lookout for. It was seen on geraniums in a few central and southern Alberta greenhouses in 1998, and one case has already been observed this year.

"If this disease is not identified at early stages, there is a danger that serious plant losses can occur," adds Mirza. "Rust causes unsightly blemishes on the leaves, petioles and stems of florist and zonal geraniums. Ivy, Martha Washington and scented geraniums are rarely affected."

"The rust fungus grows specifically on geraniums and is autoecious, meaning that it completes its entire life cycle on this one plant," adds Dr. Ron Howard, plant pathologist at Alberta Agriculture's Crop Diversification Centre South (CDCS), Brooks. "Unlike many other rusts, it does not need another host to complete its life cycle. The rust fungus *Puccinia pelargonii-zonalis* produces spores continuously, which can reinfect the same plant or spread to other plants by air currents, splashing water or workers' hands and clothing."

The greenhouse environment plays a significant role in the spread of this disease. Rust spores need free water on the leaf surface to germinate, so condensation on leaves should be avoided by making sure that temperature does not drop rapidly from the daytime setting to night setting.

"Growers can easily differentiate between a physiological disorder called edema and rust," says Howard. "If you look closely, the symptoms are different and distinct. With edema, the undersides of affected geranium leaves appear brown and corky, whereas with rust, one can see tan/rust-colored raised lesions full of spores. Rust spots may be in two concentric rings or may appear scattered on the leaf. Rust spores rub off onto fingers and clothing when infected plants are handled. Edema lesions contain no spores."

Mirza adds, "The disease can spread quickly if plants are hand watered, and economic losses can be significant. It is important to immediately notify the supplier if rust is detected."

Growers should take steps to prevent the introduction of rust into their greenhouses. Cuttings should be purchased from a reputable supplier and carefully examined for rust symptoms upon arrival. Infected shipments should be rejected. Ideally, newly arrived plants should be grown in an isolated part of the greenhouse for two to three weeks to insure that they are free of rust. If infected plants are detected, they should be bagged and destroyed. Remaining plants should be sprayed with a registered fungicide and monitored closely for any recurrence of the disease. Growers should avoid overhead watering and keep humidity levels low to help control the development and spread of geranium rust.

More information and pictures of the disease can be found on-line at <www.agga.ca>.

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# Agri-News Briefs

## 4-H public speaking finals

The 4-H Provincial Finals were held at Stampede Park in Calgary on April 6, 2002. Each of the 14 finalists presented a four- to six-minute speech on the topic *Water Issues in Alberta in 2002*. Each speaker also presented a two- to three-minute speech on an impromptu topic.

The 2002 winners were:

- First - Kathleen Leitch - Northern Lights Judging Club (lives in Leduc area). The title of her speech was *The Alberta Advantage* and discussed some misconceptions about water in Alberta.
- Second - Emma Cutfield - Millarville Saddle Sores (Millarville area)
- Third - Ashley Fox - Cloverlawn Beef (Hay Lakes area)

The prepared speeches were thoroughly researched and very well presented and the impromptus were outstanding. The Provincial Finals are sponsored by Agrium each year. The Calgary Stampede was a co-sponsor and the host of this year's competition. For further information, contact Marguerite Stark, 4-H branch head, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Airdrie (403) 948-8510.

## Taste and Discover Nature's Best

A two-day exotic and fine cuisine event is being held at the Leduc Curling Club on April 20 and 21, 2002. ***A Taste of Bison, Elk & Alberta Grown Fruit*** includes products and support from local vendors such as Executive Royal Inn, Kosmos Restaurant and Lounge, Granny's Lunch, Y'Vette's Pies and Alberta Fruit Growers. Tickets for the event are $1 each and can be pre-purchased at the Bison Centre of Excellence, 4301 - 50 Street, Leduc, AB, phone (780) 986-4100. As well as enjoying the tastes offered at the event, executive chef Phil Joy will be preparing and demonstrating cooking techniques for bison and elk, from noon until 5:45 p.m. on Saturday. For further information, contact Judy Kohlsmith at the Bison Centre of Excellence, (780) 986-4100.

Agri-News

April 22, 2002

## Common diseases of chickpea crops

Chickpeas have become a popular alternative crop over the past five years on the Canadian prairies. The total seeded area has increased from zero to more than one million acres because this crop is not only commands a good price, but is ideally suited for low moisture conditions.

"Chickpeas, however, do have some disease problems that producers should be aware of," says Kan-Fa Chang, plant pathologist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South (CDCS), Brooks. "Field surveys in 2000 and 2001 revealed many thin, patchy stands with stunted and wilted plants. Close examination of the taproots showed brownish-black lesions near the soil surface, a typical symptom of root rot. In some cases, when the root is cut open, reddish or brownish streaks may be present in the vascular tissues."

**Root rot** and seedling blight can easily limit the productivity of chickpea crops. Patchy stands encourage invasion by weeds, which are hard to control in chickpea crops, and rob the crop of moisture. Patchy stands also develop unevenly, so that fewer seeds are ready for harvest at any given time. Rotted roots mean plants have a far smaller volume of soil from which to draw nutrients and water. Moreover, root rot pathogens devour nitrogen-fixing root nodules, further reducing plant vigour. Pathogens that cause root rot and seedling blight are prevalent in prairie soils and are expected to increase with increased cultivation of broadleaved crops.

"Control of root rot diseases can greatly enhance pulse crop production," adds Chang. "Experiments at CDCS have shown that treatment with the fungicides Vitaflo 280 or Crown protects emerging seedlings against Rhizoctonia and Fusarium, and Apron offers protection against Pythium. In most cases, the improvement in stand density translates into improved yield at harvest, even in weed-free test plots."

**Ascochyta blight** is one of the chickpea producer's most feared diseases. The disease first appears as brownish lesions with black, peppery spots toward the centre. The disease quickly kills the leaves and defoliates the plant. Soon, patches of defoliated plants appear throughout the field.

"Ascochyta spores take very little time from infection to produce a new generation of spores, and these spores can spread very rapidly across a field," says Chang. "An outbreak of ascochyta blight can obliterate a field of healthy-looking plants in 10 days. If the disease infects the pods, it usually contaminates the

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## This Week

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seeds, which produce infected plants in the following year. The onset of ascochyta blight epidemics is not always predictable, so crops should be monitored from early July onwards. Research at CDCS has shown greater disease control with repeated applications of foliar fungicide every two to three weeks following mid-July until the plants mature."

Surveys of chickpea crops in southern Alberta during the summer of 2001 fortunately showed few instances of ascochyta blight. Chickpea production is new to the area, and the use of clean seed by producers will likely resulted in few sources of infection. Also, extremely dry summer weather probably slowed the spread of spores.

*Contact: Kan-Fa Chang*
*(403) 362-1334*

## Plant clean seed

A standard recommendation for crop production is to plant clean seed. No matter what the crop contamination – weeds, diseases, or insects: it is wise to avoid adding the source for a future problem. Sometimes optimum conditions are not achievable and then producers need to know the important factors to make compromises.

"Weed contamination is one of the easiest examples to analyze," says Ron Hockridge, financial business analyst with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "Obviously, if a seed source contains weeds that are particularly hard to control, or weeds that are not already on a farm, the producer should look further for seed. There are some weeds that are easy to control and appear on almost every farm. Even though you do not want to add to the seed bank, it is not as important to worry about these types of weeds. There are always some weeds that fit the middle of the annoyance scale, and this makes decisions harder. The most important tool for making decisions on these weeds is a good record of what is in a particular field. You need to know how severe problems are and if they are expanding."

Diseases are more difficult to assess. Some, like *Fusarium avenacium* are not common in Alberta and can be particularly devastating to cereal crops. It is best to have seed tested and avoid bringing in any inoculums. Seed treatment will help suppress these diseases, but it doesn't always ensure every seed is treated. To err on the side of safety, producers should try to avoid the problem entirely.

"Schlerotinia in canola is much more common to the province," says Hockridge. "It is a wind borne disease, and there is enough of the disease around to infect all canola fields. Rather than worry about a few schlerotes in seed, it's best to fight this disease in-crop."

Sometimes this means using cultural practices that will limit or eliminate the disease. However, be sure the treatment does not do more harm to the crop than good. For example, it is known that burying schlerotes of ergot for a year will destroy them. If a producer tries to do this by seeding deep, it puts the crop at risk. There are probably enough spores in the air at the appropriate time to infect cereal crops anyway. The best strategy is to make sure soil fertility is balanced and the crop is given the best chance to be healthy and fight off diseases. That doesn't eliminate the chance of getting ergot but it reduces the overall risk.

"The old recommendation to plant clean seed is still a good one," advises Hockridge. "In the real world there are often choices to be made that limit your ability to stick to good rules entirely."

For further information or to be put in touch with an Alberta Agriculture crop specialist or financial business analyst, call Alberta Agriculture's Call Centre toll free at 1-866-882-7677.

*Contact: Ag-Info Call Centre*
*1-866-882-7677*

## Mexico border clearances made easier

Easier border clearances - that's the goal of a two-year pilot project, which is a partnership between Alberta Economic Development, several other provinces and the federal government.

"This project includes placing a Border Clearance Representative in Laredo/Nuevo Laredo," says Marcia O'Connor, trade director, Mexico Latin America, with the agriculture and food branch, Alberta Economic Development, Edmonton. "Having a representative dedicated to border clearances should help facilitate the entry of Alberta food products into Mexico, which is already improving under NAFTA."

In September 2001, Luis Perez was appointed the Border Clearance Representative stationed at Laredo/Nuevo Laredo. As part of the position's mandate, Perez is available to consult with agri-food exporters prior to shipping their product to ensure that paperwork is in order and to troubleshoot at the border if a shipment is held up for any reason.

"Mexico was Alberta's third largest agri-food export market in 2001 with exports valued at $414 million, up nearly 45 per cent over 2000," adds O'Connor. "With a population of nearly 100 million people and a growing middle class, Mexico is an attractive market for Alberta exporters."

Food and beverage manufacturing accounts for about 21 per cent of Alberta's manufacturing sector and in 2001 represented $9.9 billion of manufacturing shipments. Value added food products account for over 50 per cent of Alberta's exports. In Mexico in particular, value added exports increased 135 per cent in 2000, while primary commodities only increased 25 per cent.

*Cont'd on page 3*

"However, with value added and processed products, documentation and labeling can be more complex," O'Connor cautions." Multi-ingredient products or multi-product shipments can be held up at the border. The language barrier can also be a problem."

Perez has been actively assisting companies with a variety of products: bakery, meat, potatoes, dairy, and consumer-ready products. He has also been very helpful in answering questions and finding contacts. He works closely with the Canadian Embassy and directs some inquiries there if they are outside of the agri-food area.

For more information, contact Marcia O'Connor at (780) 422-1762, fax (780) 422-9746 or e-mail <marcy.oconnor@gov.ab.ca>.

*Contact:* *Marcia O'Connor*
*(780) 422-1762*

## Beginning Farmer Loan program offers greater flexibility

Improvements to Alberta's ***Beginning Farmer Loan*** program will help producers keep pace with the province's evolving agricultural marketplace, says Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

New features include variable interest rates for short-term loans and reporting requirements that are more customer-friendly. Producers also will have broader purchasing options.

"We continue to enhance the ***Beginning Farmer Loan*** program based on what it takes to manage a successful farm operation in today's marketplace," says McClellan.

Effective immediately the loan program, administered by Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC), will offer:

- a variable interest rate option on terms up to five years
- financing for multi-use equipment such as wheel/skid-steer loaders or telehandlers
- flexibility for purchasing larger scale equipment
- financing for small or larger farm trucks
- housing loans with more features and options
- relaxed annual reporting provisions to reduce paperwork

Jim Majeski, AFSC's acting senior manager of farm lending, says the program is designed to assist farmers to start and further develop viable farm operations.

"New farmers and existing producers who have been in the business for some time, can take advantage of the Beginning Farmer Loan," says Majeski. "In fact our average customer is 35-years old and has been farming for 13 years."

For more information, farmers can contact their local AFSC district office or call 1-800-396-0215 for the location nearest them. AFSC is a provincial Crown Corporation that provides farmers and agribusinesses with financial services including crop insurance, farm income disaster protection and farm and agribusiness loans. The recently announced merger of Alberta Opportunity Company and AFSC also adds small businesses in rural and urban centers to AFSC's customer base.

*Contact:* *Jim Majeski*
*(780) 679-1349*

*Terry Willock*
*Director,*
*Communications*
*Alberta Agriculture*
*(780) 422-7683*

Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton

## Direct seeding with angle disc openers on the prairies

The strong demand from prairie farmers to reduce their cost of seeding a new crop each year drives the search for innovative methods to seed and apply fertilizer. Doing it all in one pass (direct seeding) leads the way for a wide range of crops, with machinery technology capable of precision-placement in most soils.

"Fixed-shank (hoe) implements are the most common design and use ground openers that position the seed and fertilizer in various patterns of separation," says Ron Heller, agronomist with Reduced Tillage LINKAGES, Vermilion. "This furrow system requires on-row closure (seed firming), often in the form of a packer wheel or other attachment. A disc-type (coulter) seeding implement offers lower soil disturbance, less draft and smoother field-finish than shanks. The narrow-slot design of a disc is desirable for shallow seeding, but not for certain soil and crop residue conditions. Possibly higher maintenance, and a challenge for some fertilizer methods, angle disc openers nevertheless introduce a unique way for growers to direct seed. Currently there is renewed interest in this seeding technology for the prairies."

An angle disc is conformed so that the active part of the opener is a flat, smooth, large-diameter single disc blade. The distinguishing feature is the angled position of the disc. All models set the disc on a slant front-to-back. Some also integrate a top-to-bottom tilt into the design, which is called a compound angle. This skewed arrangement of the disc aids in soil penetration, crop residue management and accurate seed placement. The different versions available offer a range of mounting, adjustment and operation capabilities (seeding and fertilizer placement). The name associated with angle disc seeding varies. Some companies use coulter-drill or air-disc

*Cont'd on page 4*

drill, others just refer to it as single disc or no-till. The newer types have a trademark name such as Barton, SDX, or Never-pin, etc.

There are several manufacturers of angle disc openers, including:

- Bourgault Industries, SK, (306) 275-2300, <http://www.bourgault.com/>
- CaseIH, WI (USA), (262) 636-6011 <http://www.caseih.com/>
- Dutch Industries, SK, (306) 781-4820, <http://www.dutchind.com/>
- Ezee-On Manufacturing, AB, (780) 632-2126, <http://www.ezeeon.com/>
- Flexi-coil, SK, (306) 934-3500, <http://www.flexicoil.com/>
- John Deere, IL. (USA), 1-800-537-8233, <http://www.deere.com/deerecom>
- Morris Industries, SK. (306) 933-8585, <http://www.morris-industries.com/>

"Before deciding which implement is best for a grower's need, a careful look at the design variations should be made," adds Heller. "Disc size (diameter) and position (vertical angle to forward travel) are important. Detailed specifications for mounting, depth control and other operational functions should be carefully examined to understand the particular design features and capability of each opener or machine. For example, fertilizer placement in a single-shoot seeding system may require a separate pass (same implement) or a dedicated set of openers (extra)."

There are several versions of this opener concept now available designed for fertilizer application as a mid-row band (MRB). This is a term that refers to the placement of a fertilizer band between every second seed row. Angle discs are also attractive for low disturbance application of fertilizer in a separate pass. The same machine might also be used to direct seed in a simple two-pass system. A growing number of custom and commercial fertilizer businesses are adopting this technology with Coulter Applicators. Farmer innovation and modifications (non-factory) continue to refine the utility of the angle disc opener. The amount and intensity of tillage required to seed our prairie cropland has been significantly reduced with the arrival of angle-disc openers for direct seeding.

For more information about angle discs, contact Heller or RT LINKAGES <http://reducedtillage.ca/>.

*Contact:* *Ron Heller*
*(780) 853-8262*

## Farm store provides avenue for marketing meat

It starts out simple enough, a sign at the farm gate, and before you know it, you've entered into the world of direct farm marketing. That's how it happened for Linda Knechtel, owner of The Best Little Pork Shoppe, in Ontario. From that first step, it's been a matter of letting her customers dictate her direction.

"I had heard about The Best Little Pork Shoppe several years ago and was excited to see them on the agenda of the 2002 North American Farm Direct Marketing Conference," says Kerry Engel, rural development specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "I took in Knechtel's session, *Adding Animal Products to your Market* and really enjoyed hearing her ideas for farm direct marketing meat."

Besides working within the existing health and agriculture regulations, Knechtel identified the following challenges:

- getting people through the farm gate
- providing a unique product
- keeping overhead costs as low as possible
- simplifying your customer's life
- creating a fun experience
- having a life (for her family)

Knechtel knows that getting people through the farm gate requires a lot of planning. She suggests analyzing the layout of your property to come up with a workable plan; look at renovating existing buildings; parking; highway access; and, creating a "country" experience. The Best Little Pork Shoppe has two pillars topped with two large pigs in BBQ aprons at the entrance to the farm. The pigs are an attention getter for both the traveling public and the press. She says that they always leave a couple of cars parked out front of the store, because people won't come in if they think that no one is there.

"One of the first things the Knechtel's did was decide how they could differentiate their products from the meat that is available at the supermarket," adds Engel. "They work with a local, flexible, abattoir to make the products they want in the way they want them. Pork Shoppe products can't be found anywhere else. Over the years, after listening to their customers they have added large, free-range roasting chickens, lamb and 40-day aged beef to their complement of meats."

Knechtel has discovered over the years that it is really easy to get big, but difficult to stay small and easy to manage. By contracting out their processing, they were able to focus on product marketing. The meat shop has added a bakery, sells complementary food products made by local agri-preneurs and has a small pig-themed gift section. The stores workforce consists of Linda, her husband and two part-time employees.

*Cont'd on page 5*

To make her customer's lives simpler, they provide a product list and recipes. Their meat is packaged in clear plastic so customers can see the product. It is sold frozen and they offer coolers for sale and ice packs for people traveling a long distance.

"The farm has incorporated some educational and entertainment components, making it possible to talk to people about modern day farming practices. They work hard to keep their business small so that they can have a life. Their goal has been to create a safe and happy place for people to do their shopping and it looks like they have achieved that goal," says Engel.

For further information on The Best Little Pork Shoppe, in Ontario, visit their web site at <www.porkshop.on.ca>.

For more information on farm direct marketing, call Engel at (780) 349-4465, toll-free by dialing 310-0000. Information is also available on the Alberta Agriculture web site at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/diversify>.

*Contact:* *Kerry Engel*
*(780) 349-4465*

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# Agri-News Briefs

## Alberta Agriculture publications only a phone call away

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development publications are well known as an unbiased source of information for farmers, ranchers and gardeners. Before the department's restructuring, publications were available at all Alberta Agriculture offices throughout the province. The distribution of Alberta Agriculture priced publications, videos, CD ROMs and free factsheets is now being handled exclusively through the Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6 If you know the publication or factsheet you want, a quick, toll free call is all that's needed to put the order in motion. A complete list of Alberta Agriculture publications, factsheets, videos and CD-ROMs is also available, and is a great reference to have on hand. To order a publication, or for information on what is available, call 1-800-292-5697. For all priced publications, VISA and MasterCard orders can also be placed using the toll free line. Most of the Department's factsheets are available on-line at the Alberta Agriculture web site <www.agric.gov.abca>.

## Visions 2002

The Alberta Agricultural Economics Association (AAEA) is holding the Visions 2002 conference, ***Carbon Credits, Innovation and Quality Assurance – Implications For Agriculture***, at the Black Knight Inn, Red Deer on May 2 and 3, 2002. The two-day conference features speakers from across Canada and from the U.S. Session one deals with *The New Realities of Quality and Identity*. The theme for session two is *Research the Driver of Economic Development*, and session three is *The Agricultural Economy in a Climate of Change*.

Early registration, by April 25, 2002, is $115, after that date, registration is $135. Student registration is $45. One-day rates are also available. For further information, contact the AAEA by visiting their web site at <www.aaea.ab.ca> or call Reg Norgy, sponsorship chair. At (780) 436-0590, Edmonton.

## Do you know an outstanding young farmer?

Canada's Outstanding Young Farmers Program (OYF) is designed to recognize farmers and farm couples that exemplify excellence in their profession. OYF also promotes the tremendous contribution of agriculture and rural Canada. Nominations close on **May 21, 2002**, so if you know an outstanding young farmer, take the time to send in your nomination for this award. Nominees are judged according to:

- progress made in their agriculture career
- environmental enhancement
- crop and livestock production history
- contributions to the well being of the community, province and nation

To qualify, a farmer or farm couple must be between 18- and 39-years of age and be farm operators, deriving a minimum of two-thirds of their family income from farming. To nominate someone for the award, call toll free 1-866-695-7352.

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Agri-News

April 29, 2002

## Zero tolerance for Fusarium graminearum

A new policy that will result in zero tolerance for *Fusarium graminearum* is currently being finalized.

"*Fusarium graminearum* is a serious threat to the grain industry, especially for the barley industry," says Shaffeek Ali, pest risk management unit leader with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Not all fusarium species produce the toxin DON, which is produced by infection by *F. graminearum*. Alberta is virtually free of this type of fusarium and the province is looking at measures to keep it from establishing in the province. Manitoba has reported approximately $50 to $100 million in losses per year because of this disease and we need to do everything we can to keep this toxic disease from infecting Alberta fields."

The toxin DON not only renders barley unusable for malting, but severely limits grain use for livestock feed. Pigs and chickens can not tolerate levels of DON over one per cent, while cattle and some other livestock can tolerate approximately seven to ten per cent DON.

"Alberta is embarking on a second year of seed testing," adds Ali. "Under this program, farmers are encouraged to test their seed before planting. To date, 1487 samples have been tested and there have been only 14 positive."

This year, the grain testing will be augmented with a new policy Alberta Agriculture is currently working on. An action plan for grain entering the province is in the works. The proposal is to move to a zero tolerance for the disease. This means that all grain and seed must be tested at the point of origin and must be certified free from *F. graminearum* before being brought into the province

"Under the new program, agricultural fieldmen, who are the pest inspectors for the province, will spot check to ensure integrity in the system," says Ali. "Action will be taken on any grain load that is not certified free of *F. graminearum*. Either the grain will be turned back and returned to its point of origin or other specific measures will be taken to ensure the threat from this disease is minimized."

This new policy will affect seed producers, livestock feeders, as well as grain importers. Policy and program implementation procedures are still being worked out, however, the program policy will to be ready for stakeholder consultation shortly. An announcement on the final policy is expected by the end of May 2002.

"I fully expect Alberta to have a zero tolerance policy for *F. graminearum* this year," concludes Ali. "No doubt there will be a phase-in period as we embark on this program, but all producers, feeders and importers should be aware that the policy is expected to be in place within six weeks or less."

*Contact:* *Shaffeek Ali*
*(780) 422-4909*

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## This Week

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## Innovative and useful aquaculture marketing tips

Jan Warren, a business development specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development for the aquaculture unit based in Lethbridge, is presently assisting the many different types of fish farmers develop their businesses and support marketing growth. Warren is helping Alberta's aquaculturists revamp marketing strategies and find new, more innovative ways to tell and sell the advantage of what they are producing.

"You've heard of fish stories ... well, producers telling a story about themselves can certainly appeal to consumers and entice them to buy from a particular outlet," says Warren. "A fish is a fish - but a fish with a little story tag, or a web site address providing information about who raised the fish, the brand name and the care and quality used in rearing the fish, can and does become a valued part of the product."

Warren has a list of marketing ideas that aquaculture producers are welcome to draw from to enhance their marketing plans:

- Ask customers what they like best. Assess customer needs – to know what they want, and be able to modify the product to better fit those needs. Working together with the customer helps meet a market need. Some may be looking for a fish to fit a plate, some may be making gourmet rollups.
- Develop an alliance with the independent businesses and players in a value chain. By collaborating and working toward a common goal, you can discover needs, opportunities and link together to supply what the market wants. Consumer demands and trends change, and as a result of shared information, a product cut or a quality management practice can change and respond quickly.
- Create a unique atmosphere. Make the business a destination by having a special service (fly-tying, real lemonade or put up an educational board about filleting fish). Create atmosphere by building a windscreened 'porch by the pond' for the non-fishing partner, build a barbecue pit and have fish frys on Friday evenings, or have a 'Catch two and buy two more already frozen' promotion. Make the business a place people love to come.
- Form a value added processing unit. Band together to operate a business unit that adds value to the product. Team up with other businesses to meet customer needs more fully, and as a group have more to offer a particular market sector. This can be anything from wood carvings of fish, custom made fishing rods, taxidermy, to processed ready-to-eat fish products.
- Seek out non-traditional marketing practices that have been used in the past, such as marketing to a particular association and offering them a group destination. Adapt to market changes by seeking out opportunities in areas that seem to be popular. Emphasize the technology used by your business, such as how fresh water is constantly moving through the system to raise an environmentally healthy fish or some way environmental knowledge is being used by the business. Technical know-how opens up lots of ways to advance the agriculture-aquaculture industry.
- Show how your fish business has woven good health, careful energy use and environmental best practices into its production practices. Find respected facts about fish, food and nutrition that build credibility. Everyone appreciates quality food from a farmer they trust.

For further information, Warren can be reached at (403) 381-5170, toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first.

*Contact:* *Jan Warren*
*(403) 381-5170*

## Using barley straw for algae control

Using barley straw is an environmentally friendly option for reducing algae, one that fish farmers and dugout/pond owners may be interested in. In some places, barley is as abundant as algae, making it an inexpensive alternative compared to chemical treatment or mechanical control.

"Some time ago, barley straw was discovered to have useful qualities for controlling algal growth in ponds," says Stephen Madden, agricultural water specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Grande Prairie. "The exact science is still not understood, however, present research indicates a benefit to its use with proper timing and application."

When barley straw is allowed to rot, processes are created within the pond or dugout that hamper algal growth. Decaying straw does not kill the algae already present, but it prevents new algae from forming. Also, barley straw is not detrimental to fish health or production.

Algae are considered bacteria, capable of fixing nitrogen from the atmosphere. This fixing of nitrogen combined with the limiting nutrient phosphorus provided by runoff, allows algae to thrive in a number of Alberta's lakes, ponds and dugouts. Problems associated with algae blooms can include plugged water filters and water intakes, discoloration in water clarity and foul odors. Algae blooms interfere with fishing, water recreation and can prove lethal by consuming all the oxygen and causing fish die-off.

"The time required for effective algae control varies with type of algae," adds Madden. "Small unicellular species can disappear within six to eight weeks. Larger filamentous algae can survive for longer periods and adequate control may not result in the first season if straw is added late."

*Cont'd on page 3*

Barley straw is most effective under oxygenated conditions. This means that a square bale of barley is probably packed too tight to work directly. Breaking down the bale into one or more loose portions will allow the straw to properly absorb water and start a thorough rotting process. Also, try setting the barley as close as possible to the water being circulated by the aeration system to ensure circulation of water through the barley.

Set-up is easy. The material will usually require weights and floats, since the straw will float until waterlogged. Once waterlogged, it becomes heavier than water, making removal of large bales quite challenging. Make sure all straw is contained in netting or wire to accommodate complete removal.

"The recommended application rate is 10 grams of barley straw for every square metre of water surface," says Madden. "The barley will require at least one month to start rotting and is generally active for about six months. To obtain best results, place the barley in the water in the early spring or in the fall before freeze up. To keep the algae control cycling, place new barley material in the dugout one month prior to the removal of the old straw. This keeps the cycle going with fresh rotting barley always in the dugout. While other straw types can be used, barley has shown the best results for algae situations."

For further information on algae control in ponds, call Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office toll free at 1-800-292-5697 and ask for a copy of the factsheet ***Algae Control in Ponds*** (Agdex #FS 485/716-2). This factsheet is also available on the Alberta Agriculture web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agdex/400/485_716-2.html>.

### *Method for estimating amount of straw required*

- calculate the surface area of your pond or dugout – i.e. 50 m x 30 m (1,500 m$^2$)
- decide on the application rate of straw (recommend 10 g m$^{-2}$)
- multiply the area of the dugout by the quantity of straw required per square metre to obtain the total quantity required – i.e. 1,500 m$^2$ x 10 g per m$^2$ = 15,000 g = 15 kg
- calculate the number of square bales. Divide the total weight of straw required by the weight of the bales (a small bale is usually about 20 kg)
- decide the weight of straw to be placed in each net. (Usually about 3 kg per net), then calculate the number of nets to be made – i.e. 15 kg/3 kg per net = 5 nets
- decide the appropriate placement of the nets by spacing them out as evenly as possible. The spacing does not need to be exact. However, the straw should be located as close to the aeration circulation as possible. This will ensure circulation of aerated water through the barley straw.

*Contact* *Stephen Madden*
*(780) 538-5606*

*Tracey Seale*
*AESA Coordinator*
*MD of Clear Hills*
*(780) 685-3925*

## Location, location, location!

What does every successful farm direct marketer need? According to Jyl Singh, a 10-year industry veteran, location helps, but planning is critical. From an Alberta perspective, Singh's integrated farm direct enterprise, Cloverdale Produce Farm Market, is ideally situated in the lower Fraser Valley of British Columbia. It is well positioned to offer the farm store, school tours, corn maze, u-pick produce and 'kidz' corral services to Vancouver area urban families. Although her local market is over one million people and she's within an hour's drive of another million from North Vancouver to Chilliwack, Singh still finds marketing her farm direct business is her toughest challenge.

"When Singh and her husband, Tim, saw the wholesale market for commercial produce lose profitability in the early 1990s, they realized they had to diversify to keep their third generation family farm viable," says Karen Goad, industry development officer with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Grande Prairie. "Recognizing their location as a benefit, they thought a farm store offered them the most potential. From that decision, they developed their simple six-step plan that guided their farm direct business from concept to current success."

The Singh six-step plan:

- sell quality produce grown on their farm
- sell quality, locally produced produce that complements their products
- sell quality BC products in the farm store which operates from May 1 through October 31. If items are not available from the local Surrey area, Singh scouts out BC, then Canadian and occasionally US Pacific Northwest alternatives
- have a clean, fresh market
- create on-farm attractions
- create an on-farm experience for urban customers

Four years after their farm store test run, Singh now manages a large, fully enclosed farm store, professionally designed corn maze, farm tours, hay rides, birthday parties, corporate events, a 'kidz' corral, pumpkin patch with a haunted house and a market garden offering u-pick peas, beans, strawberries, raspberries and blueberries in season. Now the farm direct market enterprise has a net profit running between 25 to 40 per cent, far outstripping the one to five per cent net profit from their wholesale vegetable operation.

"In March, hanging basket workshops are offered to improve off-season cash flow," adds Goad. "In February, 14-inch moss baskets are pre-sold. Workshop participants pay up-front for the chance to come to the farm in March, experience a one-on-one consultation with Singh, a professional horticulturist, and create a basket of their own design. The baskets are then held in the greenhouse until May when the workshop participants

*Cont'd on page 4*

return to pick up their basket, often buying additional plants, stopping at the farm store or enjoying some of the family activities while they are there."

The annual spring greenhouse tour for elementary school classes is another cash generator. Each child is charged $4 and given a small terra cotta pot to decorate before planting a flower seedling of their choice. The pot and flower go home with the child. Local teachers bring their classes to the farm every year, and frequently children bring their families back during the season.

There are several sources of excellent farm direct marketing ideas. They include:

- the annual North American Farm Direct Marketing Association conference
- internet searches – haunted houses and farm store information abounds
- trendy magazines - Martha Stewart, House and Home, etc give you an idea of what people are buying and what is "in"
- industry shows - gift shows and home shows are great sources of information
- local businesses and competition – offer spin-offs to complement competition's products and make the whole area a bigger attraction

For more information on farm direct marketing contact Goad at (780) 538-5629, toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000.

*Contact: Karen Goad*
*(780) 538-5629*

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## Alberta pork - passport to Mexico

Alberta's pork exports to Mexico have been showing steady growth over the past few years. With tariffs being removed in 2003, under NAFTA, the market looks even brighter for the future. Alberta pork may be on Mexican plates whether processed in Alberta or in neighboring provinces.

"Only about 60 per cent of Alberta's 3.5 million hog production is processed in Alberta," says Darren Chase, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's livestock market analyst, Edmonton. "The remainder moves out of province to processing facilities in western Canada and the United States."

"In May 2001, Canada Pork International (CPI) partnered with the Canada Beef Export Federation (CBEF) on a technical seminar with product sampling in Mexico City," adds Marcia O'Connor, trade director, Mexico Latin America, with the agriculture and food branch, Alberta Economic Development, Edmonton. "This partnering served both organizations and their members well because they share common meat buyers. Following the seminar in Mexico City, CPI held a similar function in Monterrey."

Jacques Pomerleau, executive director with CPI, comments, "We have heard from our Mexican contacts that the seminar was very much appreciated and that those in attendance learned much new information about the safety and the attributes of our respective products." CPI and CBEF were just in Guadalajara in April 2002, holding a seminar during Semana de Canada (Canada Week).

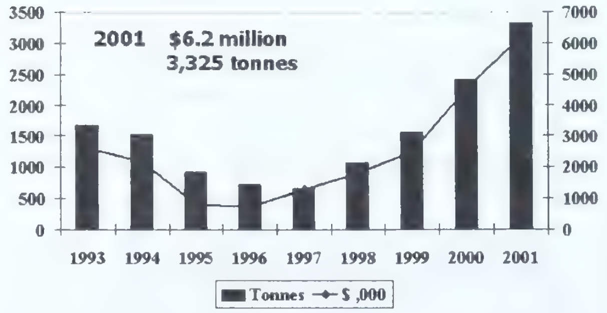
Mexico's per capita consumption of pork is 11.5 kg, about half of the per capita beef consumption of 23.2 kg. In 2000, Mexico's pork production was 1,035,000 metric tonnes (carcass weight equivalent).

Some imported pork sold in Mexico goes to processors for making ham, delicatessen meats and frankfurters. The market for these products has been growing, however, some processors are substituting poultry products for pork.

"Supermarkets are increasing their share of imported pork products," says O'Connor. "Many of the supermarkets cater to higher income consumers and their stores are as modern as any in Canada. Large retail chains are often well set up to import. Alberta companies need to remember that they must have a Mexican importer, or representative, registered with the Secretary of Finance and Public Credit (SHCP) in order to export to Mexico."

Canada's pork exports to Mexico totaled $48.4 million in 2001, Alberta accounted for 13 per cent of that value, $6.2 million. Currently, Mexico is Alberta's third largest export market for pork. ***The Pork Exports to Mexico 1993 to 2001*** table below illustrates the growth in Alberta's exports.

Alberta's Pork Exports to Mexico



Source: Statistics Canada

Cont'd on page 5

On April 9, 2002, Mexican Ministry of Economy (SE), published that import quotas for Canadian pork fresh or frozen products have been reached. These include

- pork fresh or chilled - carcasses and half-carcasses 20 per cent
- hams, shoulders and cuts thereof with bone in (fresh) 20 per cent
- other (fresh pork) 20 per cent
- pork frozen - carcasses and half-carcasses 20 per cent
- hams, shoulders and cuts thereof with bone in (frozen) 20 per cent
- other (frozen pork) 20 per cent

These duties are effective from April 9, 2002 until December 31, 2002.

*(Sources: Darren Chase (AAFRD), Jacques Pomerleau (CPI), Alberta Economic Development, Canada Pork International, Statistics & Data Development Unit AAFRD, Statistics Canada, USDA)*

*Contact: Marcia O'Connor*
*(780) 422-1762*

# Agri-News Briefs

## FightBAC!

***FightBAC!*** is a new booklet produced by the Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education. It is intended to help increase food safety awareness for older adults and senior citizens. The ***FightBAC!*** campaign teaches consumers how to assess their current food safety habits and compare them to the ***FightBAC!*** messages - clean, separate, cook and chill

- **Clean** – wash hands and surfaces often
- **Separate** – don't cross contaminate
- **Cook** – to proper temperatures
- **Chill** – promptly

To obtain copies of this publication, contact the Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education at (613) 798-3042, Ottawa, ON, or contact the organization by visiting their web site <www.canfightbac.org>.

## Farmland values

Farm Credit Canada (FCC) reports that with the exception of Saskatchewan, farmland values remained stable or increased in all provinces. Nationally, farmland increased during the last half of 2001 by 0.8 per cent. Land values in Alberta continued to edge upward for the eighth year in a row. Irrigated land values increased despite concerns about water rationing, and pasture and forage land is in strong demand. Overall land prices were up 1.6 per cent in the analysis period of July 1, 2001 to January 1, 2002. This is slightly lower than the 2.6 per cent increase reported in the first six-month period of 2001.

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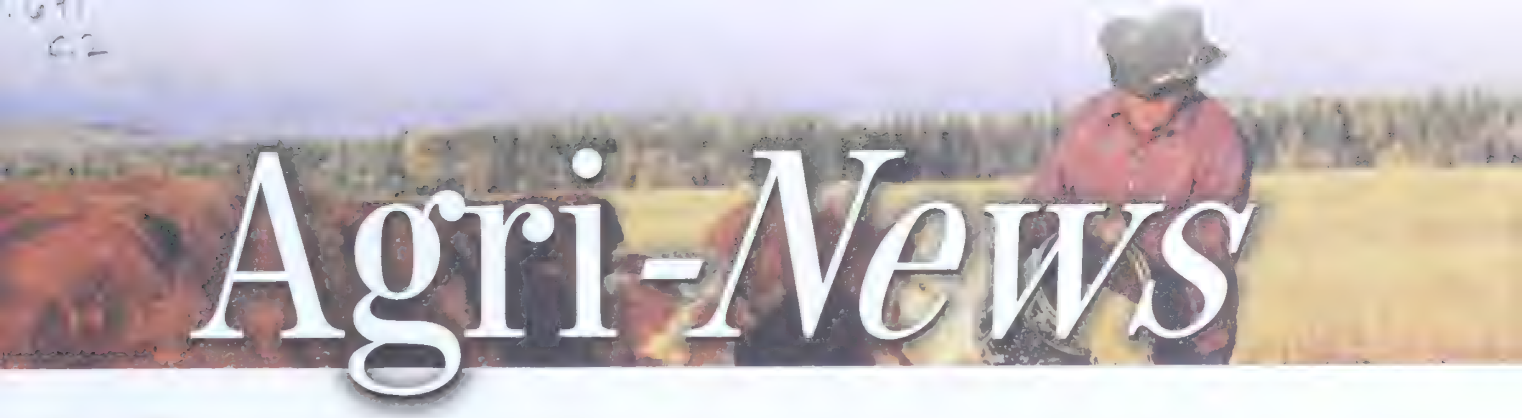

# Agri-News

May 6, 2002

## Strychnine supply

For many Alberta farmers and ranchers, spring brings with it a variety of management issues that they must consider and deal with. One of the decisions most farmers will have to make is how to manage Richardson's ground squirrels – gophers.

Once again this year, Alberta has applied for and received emergency registration approval by the Pest Management Regulatory Agency, Health Canada, for the distribution of two per cent (2%) liquid strychnine concentrate. This approval covers the distribution of this product from February to the end of June 2002 through agriculture fieldmen for agricultural use only. Emergency approval was granted last year when the threat of damage by this pest reached serious proportions. This year, however, there is an added wrinkle to the problem with rumored product shortage.

"There has been some recent media attention concerning a possible shortage of strychnine availability this spring," says John Bourne, vertebrate pest specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Vermilion. "Strychnine is produced in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, and with the on-going turmoil in those countries, they may not have been ready for the demand."

Ag fieldmen have enough supply of strychnine poison on hand to start the season. Additional supplies of the product are expected to be available by mid-May.

"We do not anticipate severe shortages of strychnine," adds Bourne. "We are, however, asking ag fieldmen to use the product judiciously and share supplies with other municipalities if there are areas of high ground squirrel concentrations or higher than expected demand for strychnine from farmers. This is only a precautionary action to ensure that the product we do have on hand is used to the province's best advantage."

As the problem with Richardson's ground squirrels has increased, it was found that pre-mixed bait was not performing as anticipated. Farmers and researchers cooperated in field research last year to measure the effectiveness of premixed bait compared to the 2% liquid strychnine mixed with fresh oats supplied by the producers for use on their own fields. The 2% solution was shown to outperform at a significant level.

"Protocols for distributing and using strychnine are strictly adhered to," says Bourne. "Ag fieldmen distribute it only to farmers who need it and for use only as intended."

Although gophers can be found over most of the province south of the Athabasca River, the greatest problem and concentration of this pest is south of Calgary to the U.S. border.

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"The best time to control ground squirrels is probably just before green-up in early spring to eliminate competition from new spring growth," continues Bourne. "It is important to wait until both males and females have emerged from hibernation, usually by late March or early April. After green vegetation is available as a food source, baits of any kind tend to be less effective because ground squirrels prefer lush vegetation over baited grain."

For further information, Alberta Agriculture has a free factsheet ***Control of Pocket Gophers and Ground Squirrels*** (Agdex # 600/684-1) available through the Publications Office by calling toll free 1-800-292-5697. The factsheet can also be found at and printed from the Alberta Agriculture web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agdex/600/684-1.html>.

*Contact: John Bourne*
*(780) 853-8225*

## Irrigation water management study released

A comprehensive summary report for a significant irrigation water management study in Alberta has recently been released through the Alberta Irrigation Projects Association (AIPA). The study was carried out through a partnership effort between the AIPA, the Irrigation Branch of Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development and the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) of Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada (AAFC).

"The information contained within the report provides the most comprehensive assessments of the state of irrigation in Alberta and the prospects for continued irrigation development and water management in the 21st century," says Wally Chinn, irrigation development section head with Alberta Agriculture, Lethbridge. "It focuses, in particular, on the more than half a million hectares of irrigation available throughout Alberta's 13 organized irrigation districts."

The five-year study was initiated in 1996, in anticipation of the pending overall water management review for the South Saskatchewan River Basin. Alberta Environment is the lead agency for the management review, scheduled for 2001-02. The report summarizes the history of irrigation development, leading up to an extensive description of the state of the irrigation industry at the turn of the century, as well as reports on technical development and analysis work that responds to the study's primary objectives of defining current and future irrigation water use efficiencies and opportunities for expansion of the industry resulting from water being freed-up through efficiency improvements.

A copy of the Report is posted on Alberta Agriculture's web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/navigation/sustain/irrigation/index.html>, click on ***The Irrigation Water Management Study – 2002*** under the Water Management Section.

"In addition to the information contained in the Report, a special excerpt entitled ***Economic Benefits and Opportunities Study*** can also be found on the web site under the Irrigation Development section," adds Chinn. "This information summarizes some of the principle findings with respect to the economic considerations of continued irrigation development in the province."

*Contact: Wally Chinn*
*(403) 381-5867*

## Manure spreading – do it right

In the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act* (AOPA) *and Regulations*, spreading manure on arable land is permitted. However, manure or runoff must not create a risk to the environment or an inappropriate disturbance, and/or enter a common body of water or leave the land on which the manure is applied.

"On January 1, 2002, amendments to the AOPA came into force with amendments that include new manure management standards," says Dr. Mohamed Amrani, nutrient management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "While the regulations and standards are aimed at new and expanding confined feeding operations (CFO), this regulation applies to all operators who apply manure. Operators must comply with the conditions in the regulation, including incorporation time, setbacks (buffers), the amount of manure applied based on nitrate and salinity increases in the soil."

### *Winter spreading*

Spreading manure on arable land has been a practice in the farming community for a long-time; however, in recent years the industry has been moving away from this practice because of some of the inherent risks. For the farmer who practiced winter spreading, there were some advantages such as the requirement for a smaller manure storage, less workload in spring and reduced soil compaction when spreading on frozen soil. The disadvantage of manure application on snow is mainly the potential of the losses due to snowmelt runoff. Farmers also used practices such as spreading on forage or direct seeded crops and on cultivated soils to increase the productivity of the land.

There are required minimum setback distances for application of manure on frozen or snow covered land. Setback distances are determined based on how manure is applied and the degree of slope near a water body.

Manure must not be applied:

- within 30 metres of a common body of water (a shared water source, either intermittent or permanent) where the land has a mean slope of less than four per cent (4%)

*Cont'd on page 3*

- within 60 metres of a common body of water where the land has a mean slope of four per cent (4%), but less than six per cent (6%)
- within 90 metres of a common body of water where the land has a mean slope of six per cent (6%), but less than 12 per cent
- if the mean slope of the land is 12 per cent or greater.

### *Summer spreading*

The preferred practice is to spread manure on land that is not frozen. This maximizes the benefits of the nutrients in the manure. It can also reduce environmental risks.

The regulations state that manure may only be applied to arable land, cultivated or non-cultivated. When it is applied to cultivated land the manure must be incorporated into the ground within 48 hours. When spreading manure on cultivated land to protect ground and surface water resources the regulations specify that:

- manure applied using subsurface injection must be setback 10 metres of a common body of water, and
- manure may not be applied within 30 metres of a water well or common body of water.

Manure can be applied to forage or direct seeded crops. When applying to forage or direct seeded crops, manure spreading must conform to the same setbacks specified for spreading on frozen ground.

Regardless of when a producer spreads their manure, they must not apply manure to land if they do not own or have charge of the land. In addition the regulations specify that the producer must have access to sufficient land base for the application of manure so not to exceed the nitrate-nitrogen limits. This could be deeded or leased land, or land where an agreement is in place for manure spreading

"The manure management standards are designed to protect the province's environment and Albertan's health while allowing sustainable growth of Alberta's livestock industry," adds Amrani. "The Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) administers the legislation and regulations, and will review all proposals for new and expanding CFOs and will monitor and enforce province-wide standards. They can be reached at 1-866-383-6722, or <www.nrcb.gov.ab.ca>."

For more information about the manure management standards contact Amrani at (780) 422-9236, Edmonton (toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000). Inquiries may also be emailed to: <cfoinfo@gov.ab.ca>.

Copies of the Agricultural Operation Practices Act and Regulations are available on Alberta Agriculture's web site <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/navigation/livestock/cfo index.html>

*Contact* *Dr. Mohamed Amrani*
*(780) 422-9236*

## Gaining a competitive edge in agriculture

Owners and managers in many industries wonder how they can gain a competitive edge over the competition. Farmers and agri-business people are no different. The status quo is no longer a good blueprint for survival, let alone future success.

"To gain a competitive edge, people first have to get a good grip on the parameters that are part of their business," says Morley Kjargaard, business management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Olds. "One program that helps owners and managers of agricultural operations identify and build their individual competitive advantages is Competitive Advantage Program for Agriculture (CAPA)."

CAPA was built upon the Agribusiness Management Program. It was piloted in Saskatchewan, starting in the fall of 2000 with 15 participants. The main benefit of CAPA is that it uses one-on-one enterprise development. Participants learn theory and then apply it to their own operations. It's more than a training program; it is a dynamic interactive learning opportunity for small to medium-sized farms and agri-businesses.

The program helps participants:

- develop their own business plans
- develop a mission statement
- assess impacts of trends and events in the industry
- develop business strategies
- identify the relationships between resources, capabilities, competitive advantages and farm profitability
- understand strategy formulation based on resources, capabilities and competitive advantage
- understand strategic, financial and operational risk

"CAPA helps people to develop financial management strategies such as analyzing financial reports, identifying and assessing their capital structure, managing liquidity and cash flow, assessing investment opportunities, protecting and collecting accounts receivable and identifying sources of risk and risk management strategies," adds Kjargaard. "Since many farms units consist of family members working together there is a communications component to CAPA."

CAPA participants learn negotiation skills, how to deal with conflict and build relationships. In any business, developing human resource strategies is important. The program has components that help participants develop a human resource strategy for their operation. These include identifying strategies to improving performance, managing conflicts, creating a reporting structure, developing career planning for key members of the operation and even identifying succession planning options.

*Cont'd on page 4*

"The CAPA program uses a variety of teaching methods: guest speakers, industry panels, group activities, case studies, discussion and six months of follow-up coaching," adds Kjargaard.

A complete CAPA session takes 12 days, spread out over three months. Cost of the program is $1400 for the first registrant from a farm and $300 for each additional person from the same farm. All Agricultural Societies in Alberta can now give scholarships to help defray expenses for producers and agri-business people to attend the CAPA program.

The dates for the next 12-day CAPA session being held at Olds College are: November 18 to 21, 2002; December 9 to 12, 2002; and January 13 to 16, 2003

For more information on CAPA, contact Kjargaard at (403) 556-4316, email: <morley.kjargaard@gov.ab.ca>, or visit the CAPA website at <www.oldscollege.ab.ca/capa>. To register call Olds College Extension Services at 1-800-661-6537, extension 7956.

*Contact: Morley Kjargaard*
*(403) 556-4316*

## What one CAPA participant has to say

Monica Bryan is part of a family farm operation near Innisfail. She took the Competitive Advantage Program for Agriculture (CAPA) course with her father, Roger. Bryan's mother and two sisters are also part of the family farm operation.

"CAPA gave us the tools to effectively manage our farm," says Bryan. "Now we understand more fully how to manage debt and still move ahead. We are in a position to make much wiser choices."

CAPA includes instruction on a variety of farm management tools. Financial programs, such as the Agricultural Business Analyzer (that tracks economic activity), can help farmers decide which route will be most beneficial. It also deals with succession planning, which is valuable for farm families.

"CAPA helped my family and me realize that each person in our operation has capabilities and resources," adds Bryan. "Realizing this will help us give responsibilities related to capabilities. Being part of a farm family and being in business together can be difficult. CAPA gave us tools to deal with conflict and family issues. It also helped us initiate a viable business plan."

Attending the CAPA course also provides an opportunity to make connections throughout Alberta with other participants and with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development staff. Part of the program is learning from the experiences of others. The CAPA instructors offer excellent support after the course in financial and human resource matters.

"Education and changing the image of agriculture are key to revitalizing agriculture," comments Bryan. "We need to encourage sustainable farming that is economical and profitable. If we want family farms to be a strong part of our industry, we have to put policies and programs in place to attract and keep youth in agriculture."

For more information on CAPA, contact Morley Kjargaard, rural development specialist-business with Alberta Agriculture at (403) 556-4316, email: <morley.kjargaard@gov.ab.ca>, or visit the CAPA website at <www.oldscollege.ab.ca/capa>. To register for the next 12-day CAPA session, call Olds College Extension Services at 1-800-661-6537, extension 7956.

| *Contact:* | *Morley Kjargaard* | *Monica Bryan* |
|---|---|---|
| | *(403) 556-4316* | *(403) 227-5488* |

## Alberta girls debate in the Legislature

Girls from across Alberta advanced on the Legislature in Edmonton to fine-tune their debating skills during the 31st Session of the Alberta Girls Parliament. Hosted by the Girl Guides of Canada-Alberta Council, this event took place from March 21 to 26, 2002.

"Four 4-H girls joined the Girl Guides: Anna Buchwald of Edmonton, Kim Sekura of Drayton Valley, Adrianne Shepherd of Botha, and Debra Stark of Calgary," says Cathy Borthwick, provincial 4-H summer program assistant, with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Airdrie. "While learning about the legislature and the various activities of Parliament, participants had the opportunity to meet with several guest speakers, including the honorable Ken Kowalski, Speaker of the House, and the honourable Lois Hole, Lieutenant Governor of Alberta. Her Honour was also present for the first debate of the session, which was on the topic of whether or not the G-8 Summit in Kananaskis should be moved to Ottawa."

Other debates included whether or not genetically modified foods should require special labeling and whether or not cell phone usage should be banned while driving.

"Participants discovered hands-on what it was like to be an MLA, debating in the Legislative Assembly and meeting in Caucus," adds Borthwick. "On the final evening, elections were held to determine which girls would return as the Premier, Deputy Premier, Leader of the Opposition, Speaker of the House, Clerk, and Sergeant at Arms."

With exciting debates in a fun and friendly environment, the Alberta Girls Parliament is a great way for young women to make friends across the province, improve speaking skills, and learn about parliament.

*Cont'd on page 5*

For more information on the Alberta Girls Parliament, mail requests to Cathy Borthwick, Provincial 4-H Program Specialist, Bag Service #1, Airdrie, Alberta, T4B 2C1.

*Contact:* *Cathy Borthwick*
*(403) 948-8508*

*A photo of the 4-H members of the Alberta Girls Parliament is available on line at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/ministry/agrinews/index.html> and click on the May 6, 2002 listing*

# Agri-News Briefs

## Skill building, goal setting and good times

Two Alberta youth are better able to face the job market and make decisions about their careers after attending the National 4-H Careers Conference in Winnipeg. Janette Bamford of DeWinton and Derek Mathon of Innisfail were awarded the trip in recognition of their hard work as 4-H members during the 2001 4-H Selections at Olds College. From March 20 to 24, 2002, Mathon and Bamford joined over 50 rural youth in Winnipeg at the conference. Delegates had the opportunity to participate in seminars and network with 4-Her's from across the country. Highlights of the conference included workshops on entrepreneurship, job preparation and career exploration. As well, delegates gained hands-on experience through mock interviews with various businesses. A tour of the University of Manitoba gave participants the opportunity to learn more about post-secondary and educational programming. One of the greatest highlights for the delegates was the ability to network and talk with 4-H youth from across the country. Although the focus of the conference was on the serious topic of careers, delegates had a lot of fun and were able to socialize more during events such as the barn dance. For more information about the National 4-H Careers Conference, check out the Canadian 4-H Council Website at <www.4-h-canada.ca>. For Alberta 4-H information, contact Cathy Borthwick, provincial 4-H summer program assistant at (403) 948-8508 in Airdrie.

## Drs. Wyatt and Newton honoured in naming ceremony

In honour of their contributions to soil science, two rooms in the Department of Renewable Resources at the University of Alberta have been named for Dr. Frank Wyatt and Dr. John Newton. Wyatt and Newton carried out the Alberta Soil Survey during the 1920s and established the first soil science department at the U of A. Much of their research time was spent at the Breton Plots, 100 km southwest of Edmonton. Today, the Breton Plots are still a valuable source of research information and having been designated as an Alberta Registered Historic Resource in 1999, are considered one of the most valuable agricultural legacies in Alberta.

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# Agri-News

May 13, 2002

## Alberta cattle producers lead with new sales manifest declarations

Amendments made to the Livestock Identification and Brand Inspection Regulation have resulted in a new sales manifest featuring a voluntary declaration of security interests in cattle as well as food safety declarations.

The cattle industry and consumers will benefit from these changes comments Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

"Our government, in co-operation with the cattle industry, has taken another step forward to enhance livestock marketing practices continue throughout the industry. The new sales manifest declarations have strengthened the paper audit trail, reducing financial risks in the sale of livestock," says McClellan

Prompted by fraudulent sales of livestock that resulted in Alberta auction markets being sued for money owed on unpaid liens, the Alberta cattle industry formed the Alberta Cattle Title Committee (ACTC) to review the situation. The ACTC, comprised of various representatives from industry associations, auction markets and processors, consulted to develop a proposal for reducing risk. After less than a year, the ACTC recommended to Alberta Agriculture that the provincial regulations be amended to develop a more effective method of protecting all parties involved in the livestock marketing process. As a result, a new voluntary finance declaration was created and included on the sales manifest.

Through the new declaration, producers, lenders and purchasers will receive improved protection from financial loss when sellers voluntarily disclose any liens held against cattle. This confidential disclosure will reduce risk and provide producers and lien holders more confidence that they will receive proper payout at the time of the sale, allowing clear transfer of title to purchasers.

Livestock Identification Services Ltd. (LIS), the non-profit agency established in 1998 by eight agriculture organizations, administers four provincial Acts and 17 regulations, and will oversee this new program. As requested, LIS will conduct Personal Property Registry searches under the provincial *Personal Property Security Act* as well as federally, under the *Bank Act*. These registries are similar to those used for auto and land titles searches for consumer protection.

Ken Weir, General Manager of LIS says that this initiative is a huge step toward cooperating with lending institutions and providing more security to livestock purchasers.

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"We are expecting this new process will stimulate investment in the livestock industry by improving marketability," adds Weir. "It again shows Alberta as a leader of livestock marketing in Canada."

In addition to the finance declaration, prohibited feed and veterinary drug declarations have been added to the manifests due to heightened awareness of related health risks. The federal government enforces these practices under the *Food and Drug Act* (Canada) as well as the *Health of Animals Act* (Canada).

Dr. Cornelia Kreplin, Alberta Agriculture's director of Food Safety, explains that the new declarations should further alert participants in a sale to any potential consumer and animal health risks.

"Consumers are becoming increasingly concerned about the safety of the food they purchase and prepare for their families," says Kreplin.

McClellan praised Alberta cattle producers for their commitment to improving livestock production and marketing practices through the new declarations.

"Once again it shows our producers are willing to take the bull by the horns as innovative industry leaders," says McClellan.

It is anticipated that the new manifests will be available to producers by June 1, 2002.

*Contact:* *Ken Weir*
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*Livestock Identification Services Ltd.*
*(403) 509-2088*

*Terry Willock*
*Director of Communications*
*Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development*
*(780) 422-7683*

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## SFEP applications available soon

The Summer Farm Employment Program (SFEP) will run again in 2002.

"Alberta's SFEP provides Alberta's youth the opportunity to gain farm work experience as part of Alberta's Summer Temporary Employment Program (STEP)," says Cathy Gilbert, program consultant with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Since the program began in 1972, it has helped more than 37,800 young people learn about career opportunities in farming."

Through the program, full-time farmers receive assistance to hire young Albertans from July 1 to August 31. The Alberta government pays up to half of the employee's monthly wage to a maximum of $375 per month.

"Prospective employees must be unemployed, between 15 and 24 years of age, and must not be a relative of the employer," says Gilbert. "Youth work a minimum of 30 hours per week and employees must be paid at least the provincial minimum wage, which is $5.90 per hour."

Application forms are processed on a first-come, first-served basis. Employers and employees must apply together.

Application forms and program guidelines for SFEP have been available on the Alberta Agriculture web site since April 30, 2002. Applications are also available at the Alberta Agriculture hub offices. Application forms will be accepted until May 31 or until all program funds are committed, whichever comes first.

High school students participating in the SFEP and who are interested in a career in agriculture may also want to consider the Green Certificate Farm Training Program (GCP) as a way to enhance their learning and gain credits. Youth interested in earning high school credits and certification should consult with their school counselor or contact the GCP at (780) 427-4187.

*Contact:* *Cathy Gilbert*
*(780) 415-9767*

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## Alberta Milk Plan Regulation at final draft

The Dairy Industry Governance team completed the final draft of the Alberta Milk Plan Regulation on April 17, 2002. They listened to input from stakeholders across the province and incorporated these suggestions into the Plan. The Team would like to thank all industry stakeholders who attended the meetings in March and April and provided further comments for refining the Plan. For a summary of the industry consultation, visit the Team web site at <www.gov.ab.ca/dairygovernance>.

"Under the *Marketing of Agricultural Products Act*, a producer plebiscite is required before forming a new producer board," says Yvonne Grabowsky, project leader with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "The plebiscite is happening this May. Ballots will be mailed out to all licensed producers in the province along with the Alberta Milk Plan Regulation. Eligible producers will vote on whether they are in favor of the Alberta Milk Plan Regulation that establishes a new board."

The Team continues to work on the Negotiation and Arbitration Regulation as well as the Marketing Regulation. These regulations will go to the producer delegate meeting in June 2002 for further refinement. This work needs to be completed by the end of June 2002, and these documents will then go to

*Cont'd on page 3*

Cabinet for approval. Both regulations are on the Governance Team web site. Alberta producers are welcome to contact any one of the Governance Team members with comments or suggestions for improving these regulations.

"Work on the administration and transition to the new organization is progressing well," adds Grabowsky. "Agreements are being drafted so that the dairy industry continues to have facilities located in both Edmonton and Wetaskiwin until at least 2004. Transition work continues in the areas of financial accounting, record keeping and high-speed information connections between the two locations."

The merging of the two staff groups (Alberta Dairy Board and Alberta Milk) is also taking place. This involves clarification of job functions needed by the new organization and giving notices to staff regarding these changes. Staff from both organizations met in April 2002 to do business planning, discuss job functions and allocate resources for the new organization. Work is in progress for the development of a new corporate identity, logo and image.

The target date for the launch of the new organization is August 1, 2002. At that time, Marketing Council will appoint an interim Board of Directors until the fall annual meeting where a new Board of Directors will be elected. Recommendations to Council for these appointments come through industry consultation. Delegates and producers across the province who attended the spring meetings suggested that Council appoint the seven producers that currently sit on the Governance Team to the Interim Board of Directors. As well, the delegates need to elect four additional producers from the delegate body to make up the 11-member interim Board of Directors. This interim Board will be in place from August 1, 2002 until the new organization's first annual meeting in the fall. At that time producer elections will be held for all 11 Board of Director positions for the new organization

For further information regarding the progress of the Governance Team, please feel free to contact Yvonne Grabowsky, project leader by calling 310-0000 and dial (780) 361-1231 or go to the Team web site <www.gov.ab.ca/dairygovernance>.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Contact* | *Yvonne Grabowsky*<br>*(780) 361-1231* | *Maureen Bolen*<br>*(403) 861-5075* |

# Provincial FCC 4-H scholarship winners address safety and hunger issues

This year, very creative ideas were submitted by the 10 provincial winners of the 2002 Farm Credit Canada (FCC) 4-H Scholarship program, including: planning a farm safety day, building a safe walking path for school kids, and starting a community garden to feed the hungry

"This year, applicants were asked to submit project plans addressing safety and hunger issues in their own communities," says Marguerite Stark, head of Alberta's 4-H branch in Airdrie. "Proposed ideas included setting up a community garden, building a safe walking path near a busy rural highway and hosting a childrens' farm safety day."

Winning projects were selected based on completeness of plan, details of how the budget would be spent, description of how it would enhance their community, creativity, research and quality of writing. The national scholarship winner will be announced in May.

Jenna Lessner of Marwayne, is one of ten recipients of this year's scholarship program. Her award-winning project highlights a farm safety day in her community for the entire family. In the true spirit of leadership in helping others, Lessner's project provides valuable information on farm safety to both parents and children, in an effort to reduce the number of farm accidents. Lessner is currently attending high school and is looking forward to a career in veterinary science.

"Through the FCC 4-H Scholarship Program, young people can propose concrete solutions to contribute to a better quality of life in their rural community," adds John Ryan, president and CEO of FCC. "FCC is proud to encourage this spirit of helping others."

"By providing young people with these scholarship opportunities, we are helping to develop our future community leaders," says Gary Skogberg, Canadian 4-H Council president "We are giving young people the necessary tools to build and enhance rural Canada today and in the future."

Scholarship applicants must have been members of 4-H, L'Association des jeunes ruraux du Québec, or Quebec Young Farmers to be eligible.

The Canadian 4-H Council is the not-for-profit agency that coordinates all national 4-H activities in Canada. Founded in 1933, the Council offers conferences, exchanges, scholarships and international travel opportunities and services to thousands of 4-H members and leaders. There are more than 33,000 4-H members and 10,000 leaders across the country participating in Canada's largest, rural-based youth development program.

FCC helps farmers and agribusiness operators grow, diversify and prosper. FCC operates out of 100 offices located primarily in rural Canada. The corporation's 900 employees are passionate about the business of agriculture. For more information, visit the FCC web site at <www.fcc-fac.ca> or contact Dean Rathwell (English) FCC community investment communications (306) 780-8632; François Magny (bilingual) FCC consultant communications manager (306) 780-7997; or, Chris Forrest, Canadian 4-H Council (613) 234-4448.

| | |
|---|---|
| *Contact:* | *Marguerite Stark*<br>*(403) 948-8510* |

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# Agri-News Briefs

## New reduced tillage agronomist in southern Alberta

Reduced Tillage LINKAGES has hired Don Wentz as the reduced tillage agronomist in the South area. Wentz comes to RTL with nearly 30 years of experience as an irrigation specialist, district agriculturist and soil salinity specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. He will be working with farmers, producer groups, industry and municipalities to increase sustainable cropping in southern Alberta. RTL's vision is that through the adoption of sustainable cropping systems, built on a foundation of reduced tillage, Alberta farmers will improve soil quality, reduce and eliminate erosion, be economically viable, produce safe and nutritious food and conserve and enhance Alberta's natural resources. Wentz will be involved with RTL's Farmer To Farmer Network, demonstrations, tours, trials and field days related to direct seeding. He will also be working with irrigated row crop producers to help prevent soil erosion. Wentz can be reached at (403) 382-8545. For more information on Reduced Tillage LINKAGES, check out the web site <www.reducedtillage.ca>.

## Greenhouse production publication

Commercial growers now have a new resource they can use to help them with many of their decisions. Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development recently released the ***Commercial Greenhouse Production in Alberta*** publication. Greenhouse systems are complex, and this new publication covers many variables Alberta growers must manage in commercial greenhouse production. The publication provides 52 pages of information to help growers optimize their greenhouse environment, including examples of management practices designed to help with environmental control: heat, ventilation, cooling; manage lighting and temperature; and manage irrigation and fertilizer. The cost of ***Commercial Greenhouse Production in Alberta*** is $8 (plus GST). Copies are available from the Alberta Agriculture Publications Office, 7000 - 133 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6. VISA and MasterCard orders can be phoned in toll free to 1-800-292-5697 or faxed to (780) 422-8835. For these orders, please include $2 (plus GST) for shipping and handling.

Agri-News

May 20, 2002

## Province launches pre-emptive strike on grasshoppers

The threat of the worst grasshopper infestation in 30 years has prompted the Alberta government to announce a $10.3-million cost-sharing program for farmers that will help defray their grasshopper control expenses.

Due to dry conditions the province experienced the past two years, as well as a mild winter, the potential of a severe grasshopper outbreak is significantly higher this spring. Current estimates indicate that approximately one-third of the agricultural area of the province will face moderate to severe infestations. Uncontrolled, this could potentially cost Alberta producers an estimated $80 to $100 million in damages.

"Grasshoppers are a serious threat to our crops," says Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "These pests have voracious appetites and move where the food is, potentially destroying crops wherever they go."

The 2002 Grasshopper Control Program will provide $4-per-acre to farmers to use toward grasshopper control. Depending on the method of control used, the program should cover approximately one-third of farmers' costs for grasshopper control.

"We have consulted with both the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties (AAMD&C) and Agriculture Fieldmen, and this assistance was viewed as the best course of action to mitigate the serious threat to our crops that grasshoppers present," adds McClellan.

Jack Hayden, president of the AAMD&C agrees. "We are pleased that the government is responding to the concerns expressed by municipalities," says Hayden. "We look forward to working co-operatively with the province to ensure the grasshopper control needs of producers are met."

Agricultural Fieldmen, who are municipal employees, will offer technical advice on grasshopper control measures and will work with farmers to ensure that pest control along roadsides and ditches occurs in tandem with farmer control measures.

Most grasshopper control measures will not begin until after the grasshopper eggs begin to hatch, estimated to be towards the end of May. While producers will not require application forms until they begin applying control measures, the forms will be available soon. Information on grasshopper control measures is available immediately by accessing the Alberta Agriculture web site <www.agric.gov.ab.ca> and clicking on Pests and Diseases.

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The forms for the 2002 Grasshopper Control Program can be picked up at Alberta Agriculture hub offices or through local MLA offices. Producers can also get applications by calling the Rural Services Division at (780) 422-9167 (toll-free by calling 310-0000), or by accessing the Alberta Agriculture web site.

The 2002 Grasshopper Forecast Map is posted on Alberta Agriculture's web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/pests/forecast/2002hopper_forecast.html>.

*Contact:* *John Knapp*
*Director, Rural Services Division*
*Alberta Agriculture*
*(780) 415-9755*

*James Calpas*
*Integrated Pest Management Specialist*
*Alberta Agriculture*
*(780) 422-4911*

For toll-free information outside of Edmonton, dial 310-0000

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## Save water, save money on lawn care

"Before you take that first cut of lawn grass, let it grow up to around 7.5 cm (3 inches) high or higher – tell your neighbours that the wait to cut the grass will be well worth its temporary 'shaggy' appearance," says Ieuan Evans, senior research scientist, with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Every winter, lawn grasses lose all of their root systems so they have to re-grow new roots every spring. If you let the grass grow tall, the roots will go down much deeper into the soil. As a result, you will have to water less often if the summer turns dry, since the roots are deeper down. Taking that first cut early and cutting the grass short results in a shallow root system which causes the turf to dry out more quickly."

Use a mulcher mower if possible, but more importantly make sure the blades of the mower are sharp, dull blades give the lawn a brown look.

Lawn clippings when broken down by soil microorganisms, will release small amounts of nutrients that the grass can use. This will by no means replace fertilizer applications, but is environmentally friendly. Clippings also contribute to improved soil structure and will increase dramatically the rate water infiltrates the soil.

Thatch is a layer of fibrous plant material stems, crowns and roots, both dead and alive that build-up between the turf and soil surface. It can also contain grass clippings, and a small amount of dried leaves and other bits of organic matter that may have landed in the thatch layer. Thatch does improve the turf wear, as it protects the plant's crown from damage and insulates the soil against temperature extremes like chinooks. Unfortunately, too much of a good thing is never good. Thatch build up can increase disease and insect problems, cause localized dry spots and decrease the turf's tolerance to environmental stresses. Thatch has to be managed by vertical raking or de-thatching. The goal is to have a thatch layer about 0.2 to 0.3 cm (1/2 to 3/4 of an inch). This will provide protection, but not encourage insects or disease. Thatch can also be controlled by combining topdressing and aerating. Aerating will encourage oxygen exchange and stimulate microbial activity and topdressing will add a layer of microorganisms that will help break down the thatch from above, so it will double the decomposition rate. Topdress with soil that is close to the particle size of the soil under the turf. It does not have to be exact, but should be close Using a fine silt loam over a clay loam soil can create problems of drainage and even soil layering.

A healthy earthworm population, which will increase up to 20 or more per square foot, will see to the clippings, taking them well below the surface. The more you feed the worms the more drainage holes they'll make, so that except in a few frequently walked-on areas of heavy traffic, you won't need to aerate the lawn.

"Research at Pennsylvania State University has shown that leaving or removing lawn clippings had little or no effect on thatch build-up," adds Evans. "When you use a mulcher, nutrients are recycled back into the lawn."

If you must remove lawn clippings, remember that lawn turfgrass is about 10 times more nutritious than sheep manure and about equal to poultry manure. If you intend using the clippings, remember that they start to decompose quickly and can give off an obnoxious odor, so don't leave clippings in a heap or in a plastic bag even over night. Instead, spread fresh clippings around trees and shrubs or directly between vegetable rows and let *Mother Nature* do the composting.

When fresh lawn clippings are used on vegetable rows, they

- help control weeds,
- conserve moisture,
- reflect light for sturdier vegetables,
- provide nutrients and humus to improve the fertility and tilth of your garden soil
- allow you to walk between the vegetable rows on wet days.

"If you're applying fertilizer to your lawn, do so as soon as possible using a 16-20-0 formulation on new lawns," adds Evans. "On lawns five years old or older, use a 22-0-0 fertilizer, especially if you've been using a mulch mower because nutrients such as phosphate, potash or micronutrients have not been removed."

*Cont'd on page 3*

Further information on turf care is included in the Alberta Agriculture publication, ***Alberta Yards and Gardens: What to Grow***. This book also gives information to help Albertans successfully grow ornamental trees and shrubs, small fruits and berries, flowers, vegetables, herbs and even water plants. Cost of this publication is $15 (plus GST). Copies are available at the Alberta Agriculture Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, or by calling toll free 1-800-292-5697. Please include $2 (plus GST) for shipping and handling. VISA and MasterCard are accepted.

*Contact: Ieuan Evans*
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## Do you have a marketing plan for bedding plants?

Sales of bedding plants have been delayed this year due to cold weather. Normally, a considerable increase in sales begins by the end of April, but this year it appears that it will be the end of May before real heavy sales start

"In order to sell plants in a shorter period of time, growers must have a marketing plan in place," says Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, greenhouse business development specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Color and beautiful blooms are just one step of the marketing process. Customer care and product maintenance information are an integral part of any marketing plan."

The basic components of a marketing plan are simple, but implementing them on an organized basis is what is required Make sure sale staff is aware that the business is not just selling a commodity, a 4-inch pot or a 10-inch hanging basket for instance. What you are selling is a distinct product, which is in the pot. You are selling a value added product.

A six-inch geranium that has a dracaena plant growing along it, is a value-added product

"Sales staffs in most bedding plant greenhouses are quite knowledgeable about the quality aspects of their products," adds Mirza. "Information on tags is very generic and customers must be given more information on proper handling of the plants after they leave the greenhouse. It is a good idea to sell fertilizers along with the plants so that customers can enjoy the color for a longer period of time."

Additional marketing tips:

- make sure that when customers enter the greenhouse, someone is available to help them
- have flowering plants near the front entrance – flowers do attract people
- make written information available about the products you are selling
- display your membership of different associations you or the staff belong to
- emphasize if any aspects of the product are unique, such as pesticide free or organically grown
- many retail growers are referring customers to their websites where they post answers to the most commonly asked questions. Alberta Greenhouse Growers Association <www.agga.ca> has a member's forum where customer questions can be posted.

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*(780) 415-2303*
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## Botrytis gray mold can destroy crops

"The recent cool, cloudy weather in many parts of Alberta is forcing greenhouse growers to reduce ventilation and this has resulted in the appearance of a fungal disease commonly called gray mold or botrytis blight," says Dr. Ron Howard, plant pathologist at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South (CDCS), Brooks. "This disease has been observed in several types of vegetable crops, bedding plants and tree seedlings."

Growers sometimes misdiagnose gray mold and resort to spraying certain fungicides that may not be effective in controlling the disease. Botrytis *cinerea*, the fungus that causes gray mold, thrives under cool, humid conditions, and can be seen developing in closed plant canopies, on fallen leaves, pruning sites, aborted fruit and leaf surfaces. The presence of a gray-brown mold on infected plant parts is a telltale sign of the disease.

"Gray mold, if unchecked, can cause significant crop losses and cut into a grower's financial returns," adds Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, greenhouse business development specialist, Alberta Agriculture's Crop Diversification Centre North (CDCN), Edmonton. "For example, if you lose 10 six-inch geraniums it's a loss of over $50, in addition to the time spent on removing infected leaves or flowers. Many producers grow geraniums at a high density, which can cause gray mold to develop, spread and destroy the plants. Just before sale, a lot of labor is needed to remove the affected leaves and flowers. Growers must make well informed management decisions before this disease gets out of hand."

"Gray mold can devastate tomato fruit, can infect portions of stems where leaves have been removed, and can attack leaves and blossoms," says Dr. Nick Savidov, greenhouse crops scientist at the CDCS. "Botrytis survives in infected plant parts and can then spread spores to healthy plants. For this reason,

Cont'd on page 4

diseased tissue and prunings should be removed from the greenhouse. Growers must also pay attention to environmental controls to keep the spread of this fungus in check. Steps should be taken to reduce relative humidity to approximately 70 per cent and to avoid condensation by heating and ventilating at the same time."

When checking for this disease, growers should look for areas in the greenhouse where air movement is reduced and areas that are cooler at night. These are the places where gray mold is likely to be a problem.

"Many growers are reluctant to follow the practice of dehumidification by ventilation because they believe that heat is being wasted," continues Mirza. "However, economically speaking, it is the wrong decision not to attempt to control gray mold by following this practice. The destruction of just one cluster of tomatoes is a loss of two pounds of fruit and that translates into a loss of at least $3.00."

Howard adds, "In addition to focusing on better air movement, sanitation and proper temperature control, growers have access to several fungicides which can be used to control this disease."

Mirza, Howard and Savidov are members of the Greenhouse Resource and Extension Assistance Team.

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## Quality Farm Dugouts

Dugouts that are properly planned, constructed, maintained and treated can provide a dependable supply of good quality water for a farm. Prairie Water News, an interprovincial, intergovernmental group, has developed and published a manual that provides the latest research information on improving the quantity and quality of dugout water on prairie farms.

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development; Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada; Manitoba's Ministries of Agriculture, Environment, Health and Intergovernmental Affairs; Saskatchewan Water Corporation; and, the Saskatchewan Research Council, have cooperated to ensure that the best possible information is made available to farmers for planning and constructing new dugouts as well as for managing and maintaining existing dugouts.

The workbook will help answer many questions farmers have when it comes to improving the supply and quality of their farm dugout water, such as:

- What are the annual water requirements for the farm?
- Is the farm water supply drought proof?
- Do you know how to size a farm dugout?
- Do you and the contractor know how to properly construct a dugout?
- Do you know how to select and install dugout equipment to improve water quality?
- Do you now the health risks associated with using untreated dugout water?
- Are you aware of what treatment systems are effective for dugout water?

"The 124-page ***Quality Farm Dugouts*** publication is an important and useful resource tool for farmers on the prairies," says Bob Buchanan, agriculture water specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Leduc. "The manual focuses on a typical farmyard type dugout that is filled from surface water runoff and is used for livestock watering and, in some areas, for household use. It was designed to help farmers develop and maintain a dugout water system to meet all of the farm's water needs for years. The workbook provides a systems approach to improving the supply and quality of water, and that all starts with understanding the dugout watershed and continues to its final use."

The workbook contains nine modules and five worksheets. The nine modules are:

1. **History** – background on the use of farm dugouts on the Canadian prairies
2. **Understanding prairie dugouts** – some of the unique aspects of prairie climate and the challenges involved in securing and maintaining a good supply of dugout water
3. **Planning** – information on how to size a farm dugout and management practices to protect water quality
4. **Design and construction** – explains the importance of proper design and construction for ensuring a dependable supply of good water
5. **Operating systems** – discusses water intakes, pumps, piping, aeration and remote livestock watering systems
6. **Water quality for domestic drinking water** – identifies health risks and water testing procedures necessary for guaranteeing a safe dugout water supply
7. **Water treatment for domestic water supplies** – deals with water treatment processes and treatment systems required to produce good quality water in an effective and safe manner
8. **Dugout management** – looks at ways to monitor changes in dugout water quality and apply treatment strategies such as aeration and chemical control of algae and plants

*Cont'd on page 5*

9. **Trouble shooting** – provides tables to assist with diagnosis and solutions to dugout water supply and quality problems

The five worksheets provided with the manual will help farmers properly size their dugouts and water systems, estimate dugout construction costs, and record the information required to properly maintain their dugouts and water treatment systems.

Copies of this free publication are available through Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, or by calling 427-0391 in the Edmonton area or toll free in Alberta at 1-800-292-5697.

*Contact:* *Bob Buchanan*
*(780) 422-5000*

## Vermilion 4-H teen chosen for Premier's Award

The highest honour bestowed by Alberta's 4-H program has been presented to Lauren Chykalsky, a 19-year-old college student from Vermilion. Chykalsky was chosen as the Premier's Award winner from 117 of the province's top 4-H members during the annual 4-H Selections Program in Olds held May 3 to 6, 2002.

Chykalsky says she is thrilled to be named as the 39th Premier's Award recipient and is excited about the upcoming year of opportunities. "4-H is the most amazing program ever. I am so glad I can contribute and give back what 4-H has given me. Without 4-H, I would never have had some of the opportunities it has given me. I would like to thank every 4-H member for always being the best they can be," adds Chykalsky.

For the last seven years, Chykalsky has been an active member in the Strong Creek 4-H Beef club, the Berwyn 4-H Multi Coveralls and the Vermilion 4-H Beef club, and has held positions at the executive level. She has also been an avid participant in various regional and provincial 4-H activities.

Chykalsky will officially accept her award from Premier Klein at a later date. She succeeds Shawna Wallace of Hanna, the recipient of the 2001 Premier's Award.

In addition to receiving the Premier's Award, Chykalsky becomes a 4-H Ambassador. Chykalsky will promote 4-H, along with 15 others who were chosen at Selections as 4-H Ambassadors for their leadership, communication and personal development skills. An additional 56 members were chosen as major award recipients and will represent Alberta at major educational programs and tours throughout Canada and the United States over the next 12 months.

"The Alberta 4-H program is one of the best in Canada and we are pleased to support all 454 clubs around the province," says Shirley McClellan, Alberta's Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "I congratulate this year's Premier's Award winner and all of the Ambassadors. They are tomorrow's leaders, and history has shown that many go on to choose careers in our agriculture industry. We are certainly proud of their accomplishments."

Richard Marz, MLA for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, extended greetings to the participants and award recipients. "It was an honour to announce this year's Premier's Award winner. Chykalsky certainly exemplifies the skills, leadership and commitment to the community that characterizes all 8,562 of our 4-H members," says Marz. The sponsors of the Selections Program - Lammle's Western Wear, Agricore United, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, were also recognized.

Sixteen new Alberta 4-H'ers were selected to complete the current 4-H Ambassadors Group. 4-H Ambassadors exemplify the leadership, communication and personal development skills for which Alberta's 4-H program is recognized. Their role is to promote 4-H. These 16 young Albertans are:

| | |
|---|---|
| Southern Region – | Roberta Lindeman, Milk River |
| | Ainsley Wall, Coaldale |
| Calgary Region – | Megan Bond, Carstairs |
| | Cayley Cunningham, Three Hills |
| | Amy Richardson, Bowden |
| West Central Region – | Ashley Fox, Hay Lakes |
| | Shelagh Murphy, Lacombe |
| | Nathan Stone, Westerose |
| East Central Region – | Amy Deagle, Consort |
| | Tamara Quaschnick, Hanna |
| Northeast Region – | Lauren Chykalsky, Vermilion |
| | Sean Granigan, Edgerton |
| Northwest Region – | Jayne Powell, Edmonton |
| | Crystal Young, Breton |
| Peace Region – | Sandy Parliament, Fairview |
| | Candace Yanishewski, Spirit River |

Also at the Selections Program, 57 trips were awarded to 4-H members. A list of award recipients and a brief award description are posted on-line at <http://www.gov.ab.ca/acn/200205/12278.html>.

*Contact:* *Marguerite Stark*
*Head, 4-H Branch, Alberta Agriculture*
*(403) 948-8510*
*(dial 310-0000 for toll-free access in Alberta)*

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# Agri-News Briefs

## Call Centre extends hours for the growing season

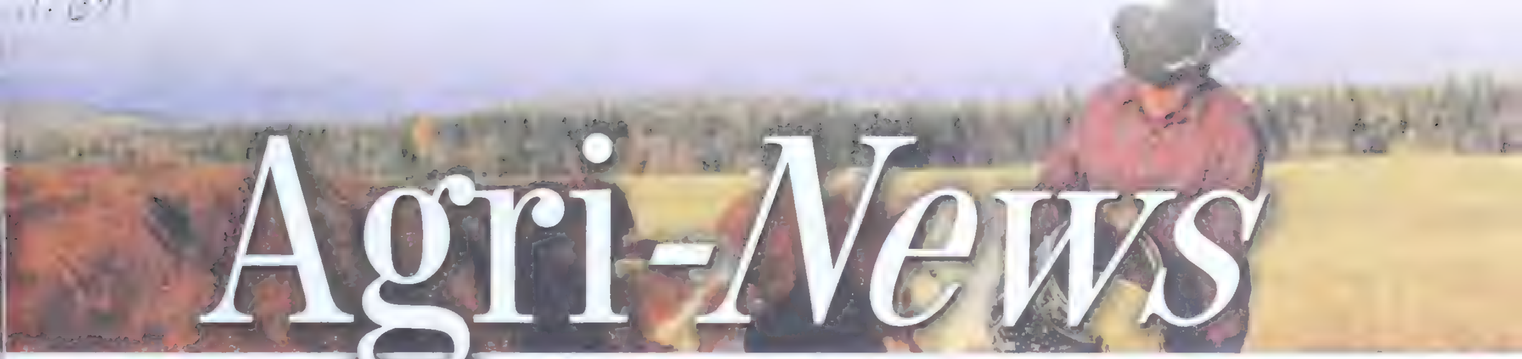
Beginning May 15, 2002, the Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Ag-Info Centre is extending their hours of availability for the summer growing season. Crop Specialists will now be available at the Ag-Info Centre every Monday to Friday from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. as a resource to producers and to answer their questions. The Ag-Info Centre's toll free number is 1-866-882-7677.

## Pasture school full

The Western Forage/Beef Group is holding its annual pasture school at the Lacombe Research Centre on June 18 to 20, 2002. Once again this year, registration has reached capacity. To be put on a list for registration applications for the June 2003 school, contact Cathy Hendrickson with the Western Forage/Beef Group at (403) 782-8030, toll free in Alberta 1-800-340-9178. Early registration is advisable.

## 2002 Hort Congress

The 2002 Alberta Horticulture Congress will be held at the Mayfield Inn, Edmonton, on November 14 and 15, 2002. This year the Congress will be held over two days only. Technical sessions will be offered in the afternoon of each day. Keynote speakers will lead off each day's seminars. Kit Grant will start the Congress off with a presentation called *Handling Changes and So Much To Do - So Little Time*. The second day features Lori Colborne who specializes in working with small business, corporation and association marketing. A new feature this year is a Congress web site where the program and registration form will be available. The Hort Congress web site <www.albertahortcongress.com> will be available by the end of June 2002. The program will be posted later in the summer. For more information, contact the Congress Office at (780) 415-2324, Edmonton.



# Agri-News

May 27, 2002

## Operation CleanFarm – agricultural pesticide collection program heads for Alberta

Alberta will be measurably safer and cleaner following a three-year stewardship program initiated by CropLife Canada. Operation CleanFarm will be offering Alberta farmers an opportunity to remove outdated, unusable, no longer registered or otherwise obsolete agricultural crop protection products. These products will be collected and properly disposed of at no cost. The first collection is scheduled for October 16 to 18, 2002 and will cover the province's Peace River region Collections in 2003 and 2004 will cover central and southern Alberta, respectively.

"Herbicides, insecticides, fungicides and rodenticides will be targeted by Alberta's Operation CleanFarm for collection and disposal at no cost to farmers," says Anne McInerney, communications officer with Alberta Environment, Edmonton. "The initiative offers farmers the opportunity to clean out and dispose of old crop protection products that may have been stored on-farm for years. Operation CleanFarm will assist farmers eliminate potential leakage hazards posed by aging containers."

Alberta's program is part of a Canada-wide obsolete pesticide collection and disposal program that was first introduced in 1998. To date, some 455 metric tonnes of obsolete agricultural pesticides have been collected coast to coast through programs in Atlantic Canada, Saskatchewan, Ontario and British Columbia. Programs are currently under development in Manitoba and Quebec.

"Based on the success of Alberta's ongoing agricultural chemical container collection program, Alberta's Operation CleanFarm is expected to collect an unprecedented number of outdated, unusable, no longer registered or otherwise obsolete products," adds McInerney. "More than one million empty pesticide containers are collected in Alberta each year through the voluntary cooperation of Alberta farmers

Alberta's Operation CleanFarm is a collaboration of government, industry and the agricultural community with the twin goals of environmental and health protection. CropLife Canada, an association of crop protection manufacturers, is contributing 50 per cent of the program costs. The other 50 per cent is funded by the Agriculture and Food Council of Alberta through the Canadian Adaptation and Rural Development fund. Other participants contributing time, expertise and facilities include Alberta Environment, Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development, the Canadian Association of Agri Retailers, the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, and several other producer groups.

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More specific information regarding the 2002 Peace River region Operation CleanFarm collection will be available in early fall as plans are finalized.

*Contact:* *Anne McInerney*
*(780) 427-6267*
*e-mail: anne.k.mcinerney@gov.ab.ca*

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## Brown evergreens?

Browning of evergreens shows up with the warmer temperatures of spring, especially after a mild winter. Browning affects the appearance and growth of highly prized evergreens. In cases were severe injury occurs and most of the needles are lost, the plant can die.

"Browning can be very selective where it appears on the tree or shrub," says Shelley Barkley, information officer at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South, Brooks. "It can occur on a few branches at the top or sides, on one side, or on the entire tree. Each evergreen responds with different colors. Cedar leaf scales will fade from green to light tan or reddish-brown. Branches or branchlets of junipers turn brown or orange. The needles of spruce and pine turn brown, although Colorado blue spruce can turn a purplish-brown."

Winter drying of needles occurs in warm winters as moisture is continuously being lost through the needles and can't be replaced as the roots are in a dormant state. Winds, warm or cold, will suck the moisture from the needles. Sometimes the snow cover line may be noticeable since the snow offers protection from drying. On warm, sunny winter days, radiation from the sun or reflection from snow and light-colored building can increase the leaf temperatures to 20 degrees Celsius over air temperatures. This will exhaust the moisture in the stems and branches.

"Careful pruning will be required to restore the form of the evergreen, but wait with the pruning until you are sure what parts are dead and what parts are going to grow," adds Barkley. "If the soil in the root zone is dry, immediately give the plant a good soaking – this will prevent further drying damage. Fertilize lightly, if at all."

Dealing with browning is one of prevention. Keep evergreens well watered during the spring and summer (but do not drown them), fertilize very lightly, if at all. Keep the plants pest free. Water the plants well late in the fall to make sure the plant is as pumped full of water as possible before it goes into its dormant state.

Local Garden Centres can provide information for gardeners. Also, information on yard, garden, turf, shrub and tree care is included in the Alberta Agriculture publication, ***Alberta Yards and Gardens: What to Grow***. This book gives information to help Albertans successfully grow ornamental trees and shrubs, small fruits and berries, flowers, vegetables, herbs and even water plants. Cost of this publication is $15 (plus GST). Copies are available at the Alberta Agriculture Publications Office, 7000 – 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, or by calling toll free 1-800-292-5697. Please include $2 (plus GST) for shipping and handling. VISA and MasterCard are accepted.

*Contact:* *Publications Office*
*(780) 427-0391 or 1-800-292-5697*

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## Greenhouse bedding plants business in full swing

During the May long weekend, greenhouse bedding plant businesses swing into the busiest time of the year. Plants are blooming and ready for sale!

"This is the time when growers have to make several business decisions regarding the selling of bedding plants in a limited period of time," says Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, greenhouse business development specialist at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre North, Edmonton. "There are many 'how to' ideas about attracting customers, but the best way is to have a business based on quality. Increased revenues can also be realized by making more value-added products available to clients for a longer period of time."

Most of the time, a series of production decisions made by growers from February to April is the foundation for quality of plants in greenhouses. These decisions include the type of material to be grown, selecting a growing medium conducive to good plant growth, monitoring disease and insect problems and making sure that the greenhouse environment promotes plant growth.

"Growers must pay close attention to avoid plant loss because any such loss decreases revenue," adds Nabi Chaudhary, senior economist with Alberta Agriculture. "Growers must be aware of their production costs in order to establish a favourable market price. Many times growers depend on prices that other growers may be charging, but in reality growers must know firsthand what selling price is appropriate for their products. A recently completed study, ***The Economics of Production and Marketing of Greenhouse Crops in Alberta*** showed that bedding plants and ornamental greenhouses recorded an average return on investment of 13.6 per cent. The return to equity for these greenhouse operations was estimated at $1.08 per square foot. This is a high return when compared to other greenhouse crops like vegetables and poinsettias."

"Bedding plant growers should be able to compete effectively with growers from out-of- province because of plant quality," says Mirza. "The challenge is to let consumers know that

*Cont'd on page 3*

Alberta quality is better and that there is a value added component when buying locally."

"On average, only $0.07 per square foot is spent on marketing bedding plants. This emphasizes the point that in order to compete effectively in this competitive market, growers must advertise their product," continues Chaudhary.

Mirza, in his new capacity as a business development specialist, will continue to provide assistance to the greenhouse industry in collaboration with the Greenhouse Resource and Extension Assistance Team (GREAT).

For further information on greenhouse business development, or a copy of the Greenhouse Report, please contact Mirza at (780) 415-2303, e-mail <mohyuddin.mirza@gov.ab.ca> or Chaudhary at (780) 422-4054, e-mail <nabi.chaudhary@gov.ab.ca>.

*Contact:* *Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza* *Nabi Chaudhary*
*(780) 415-2303* *(780) 422-4054*

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## AFSC service information just a click away

Information on crop insurance, farm loans and commercial lending are now only clicks away for Alberta farmers and small business owners. Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC) has a new web site <www.afsc.ca> that will augment the in-person services provided by its network of 50 office locations across the province.

"Farmers and commercial lending customers will have better-than-ever access to the information they need to make management decisions," says Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

The new web site debuts the first of a series of value-added information tools for AFSC customers. A new ***Alberta Management Insights*** program allows farmers to access yield and variety information gathered from 15,000 farms and 10 million acres. Producers can use this information to compare their yield results with others in the geographic area. Other information tools will be added over time.

AFSC is a provincial crown corporation that provides farmers and agri-businesses with financial services including crop insurance, farm income disaster protection and farm and agri-business loans. The recent merger of Alberta Opportunity Company (AOC) and AFSC added small businesses in rural and urban centers to AFSC's customer base.

*Contact:* *Dave Schurman*
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Dial 310-0000 for toll free access outside Edmonton

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# Agri-News Briefs

## Campbell speaking at the U of A

Professor Keith Campbell, Roslin Institute, one of the scientists responsible for the cloning of 'Dolly', will be speaking at the Telus Centre at University of Alberta, Edmonton, on May 30, 2001 from 5:00 to 6:00 p.m. Background information on 'Dolly' and on the Roslin Institute in Edinburgh, Scotland, can be viewed on-line at <http://www.roslin.ac.uk/>. For further information about Campbell's speaking engagement, contact Myrna Snart, Faculty Development Officer, U of A, (780) 492-2118 or e-mail: <myrna.snart@ualberta.ca>.

## Food Processing Centre re-opening

The official grand re-opening of the Leduc Food Processing Centre will be held on May 29, 2000. The facility has been newly renovated and expanded, featuring a 15,000 square foot addition and new production equipment. The Centre will be officially re-opened by Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, and Mark Norris, Minister of Alberta Economic Development. The public is welcome to tour the premises from 2:30 p.m. until 6:00 p.m.

## ASTech awards nominations

The Alberta Science and Technology (ASTech) Leadership Awards Foundation has opened nominations for the 2002 ASTech Awards and Prizes. These awards recognize and honour individuals, businesses and institutions that have made significant contributions to the province's science and technology community. Nominations for this 13th annual awards event will be accepted through June 28, 2002.

**Awards include**: Outstanding Achievement in Applied Technology and Innovation; Outstanding Leadership in Alberta Science; Outstanding Leadership in Alberta Technology; Outstanding Commercial Achievement in Alberta Science and Technology (two categories based on size or corporation); Leaders of Tomorrow Award; Outstanding Contribution to the Alberta Science and Technology Community; and ASTech Foundation Special Award.

**Prizes include**: NRC/ASTech Innovation in Industrial Research (North of Red Deer); NRC/ASTech Innovation in Industrial Research (south of Red Deer); Syncrude/ASTech Innovation in Oil Sands Research; AVAC/ASTech Innovation in Agricultural Science; Al-Pac/ASTech Innovation in Integrated Landscape Management; Excellence in Science and Technology Journalism: General Public; and Excellence in Science and Technology Public Awareness.

Copies of the nomination forms and details on each Award and Prize are available on the ASTech web site at <www.astech.ab.ca> or from the foundations office. For further information, contact Bill Watson or Kristi Baron (403) 266-2000 or toll free 1-877-332-6092.

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# Agri-News

June 3, 2002

## Dairy restructuring moves to next phase

On May 14, 2002, the *Dairy Omnibus Act* (Bill 15) was given Royal Assent by the Alberta Legislature. This Bill allows the governance of dairy production and marketing to move from the provincial government to Alberta's dairy producers.

The approval of Bill 15 paves the way to conduct the required plebiscite in order to establish a producer board under the *Marketing of Agricultural Products Act*. All dairy producers in the province will be given the opportunity to vote in the plebiscite.

Under the current system, a government appointed board holds the responsibility for industry governance. The plebiscite will determine if there is producer support for the creation of an elected producer organization that will be responsible for governing the dairy industry in Alberta. The name for this new organization will be Alberta Milk.

"We appreciate the government's support of Bill 15 and are excited about moving on to the next phase of this process Producers have been asking for greater input into the governance of their industry, and now we have the opportunity to achieve this," says Bill Feenstra, chairman of Alberta Milk Producers.

This process began back in the spring of 2000 with a review of the existing governance structure conducted by MLA Tom Thurber. The recommendation coming out of that review was to shift governance away from government and into the hands of industry stakeholders. As a result of the Thurber review, a governance team was created with producer, processor and government representation to lead the governance review process. In the preceding months, this team developed a regulatory framework in consultation with producers and industry that will meet the needs of the dairy industry now and into the future.

"It is now up to producers to determine the future course of the industry, by taking the time to vote in this plebiscite," says Christine Anderson, general manager of Agricultural Products Marketing Council with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton.

Ballots have been mailed to all licenced Alberta dairy producers. Any producers who did not receive the ballot package are encouraged to call Anderson at (780) 427-2164 as soon as possible. Producers must return their ballots to the returning officer no later than June 17, 2002. If there is a favourable vote, the targeted date for transition to the new organization is August 1, 2002.

*Contact:* *Christine Anderson*
*(780) 427-2164*

## This Week

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# Census says ...

Statistics Canada released the 2001 Census of Agriculture information on May 15, 2002.

The farm data show in some detail what was happening on Canadian farms on May 15, 2001. It presents statistics on all farm variables, including: number and types of farms, crop and land use areas, land management practices, livestock and poultry numbers, farm machinery and equipment and farm operating expenses and receipts.

"Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development will be posting some of the 2001 farm data for Alberta, on the web site <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca>," says Reynold Jaipaul, livestock statistician with Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton. "Periodically visiting this site will keep farmers abreast of new Census postings as they are received. Statistics Canada will continue to release information from the 2001 Census over the next several months. Some specific target dates are November 20, 2002 for the release of farm operator data, such as age and sex, farm and non-farm work, farm injuries; and, the Fall of 2003 when it is expected there will be a release of data from the Agriculture-Population Linkage Database regarding socio-economic characteristics of farm operators, their families and households, including information such as level of education and income."

Some of the Alberta specific data included in the first release from Statistics Canada includes:

- There was a sharp decline in number of farms in Alberta, according to 2001 Census of Agriculture. The 2001 Census of Agriculture counted 53,652 census farms in Alberta, a 9.1 per cent decline during the past five years. This was, however, lower than the 10.7 per cent decrease at the national level.
- Alberta had the second-highest number of census farms among the provinces. Ontario was first with 59,728 farms.
- Alberta's share of farms nationwide has increased slightly since the last Census of Agriculture. In 1996, Alberta accounted for slightly over 21 per cent of the national total. By 2001, that share had grown to just under 22 per cent, ahead of Saskatchewan with slightly less than 21 per cent.
- The overall number of farms in Alberta has been declining. The size in terms of area, herd sizes and gross farm receipts has been increasing. The average Alberta farm was 970 acres in 2001, up 10.2 per cent from 1996.
- Since 1996, Alberta's total agricultural land has increased 0.2 per cent to 52.1 million acres.
- Alberta has 31 per cent of the agricultural land in Canada, behind first place Saskatchewan.
- Area under crops increased 1.9 per cent to 24 million acres, again the second largest area in Canada.

### Farm receipts

- Alberta's total gross farm receipts were $9.9 billion in 2000, while operating expenses reached $8.9 billion. In general, expenses rose slightly faster than revenues.
- Over the five-year period, prices farmers received for their products declined by 7.0 per cent, while prices they paid for expenses such as fertilizer and fuel increased by 11.9 per cent.
- Alberta is the largest agricultural province in terms of gross receipts, accounting for 26 per cent of the Canadian total.
- In 2000, in Alberta, the ratio of operating expenses to gross farm receipts was 0.90:1; in other words, 90 cents of operating expenses were spent for every dollar received in gross farm receipts. This compares to 1995, when the expense to gross receipts ratio was 0.84:1. (Expenses collected on the Census do not include depreciation.)
- The number of farms with less than $250,000 of gross farm receipts fell by 13.4 per cent between censuses, and those with $250,000 or more increased by 35.6 per cent.
- There were 7,006 of these larger farms in Alberta in 2001, and while they represented 13 per cent of the farms in the province, they accounted for 73 per cent of the total provincial gross farm receipts reported for the year 2000.

### Farm type

- Cattle farms are the most common types of farms in Alberta accounting for 44 per cent of all farms.
- Wheat, grain and oilseeds farms make up about one-quarter (24.7 per cent) of the farms. There has been very little change in these shares since 1996.

### Organic farming

- The 2001 Census was the first time farmers were able to report on their census forms that they produced certified organic commodities. In Canada, a farmer who wishes to become "certified organic" must apply to a recognized certification agency.
- There were 197 certified organic farms in Alberta on Census Day, 0.4 per cent of all farms in the province. Nearly three-quarters of the certified organic farms in Alberta reported field crops.

### Other highlights of Alberta agriculture

- The 2001 Census of Agriculture enumerated 6.6 million cattle, up 11.3 per cent from 1996.
- Alberta accounts for 43 per cent of the total cattle and calves in Canada. Saskatchewan accounts for 19 per cent.
- No-till seeding, or conservation tillage (tillage that retains most crop residue on the surface), were used on 63 per cent of the land prepared for seeding in 2001 compared to 43 per cent in 1996 and 27 per cent in 1991. These practices were used on 11.6 million acres of seeded cropland.

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- Spring wheat, the largest single crop in Alberta, accounted for roughly 24 per cent of Alberta's field crop area and 28 per cent of total spring wheat in Canada. Between 1996 and 2001, spring wheat area declined 9.9 per cent to 5.8 million acres.
- Alberta increased its seeding of durum wheat 23.2 per cent to 962,906 acres, reflecting the fact that durum does better than other grains in dry conditions.
- Similarly large increases were seen in the lands devoted to hay and other fodder crops. These increases in forages are in response to a growth in the cattle sector, a good hay export market and cattlemen growing more hay in response to recent droughts in parts of Alberta.
- Potato acreage jumped 85.3 per cent to 58,341 acres, moving Alberta to fourth place in area behind Prince Edward Island, Manitoba and New Brunswick. Potato acreage has been growing steadily over the past 20 years from 16,628 acres in 1981.
- The total number of pigs in Alberta increased 17.2 per cent to 2 million in 2001. On a provincial share basis, Alberta ranks fourth behind Manitoba. Quebec had the most pigs in 2001 with 4.3 million and Ontario came in second.
- The total number of sheep and lambs increased 18.3 per cent to 307,302 in 2001. Alberta was second only to Ontario in sheep and lamb numbers in 2001. The increase in sheep and lambs was driven by an increased domestic demand for lamb.
- Some non-traditional operations have grown significantly. Bison numbers have more than tripled from 22,782 in 1996 to 79,731 in 2001. Alberta's bison herd accounted for over 50 per cent of the national total in 2001
- Inventories of llamas and alpacas soared from 3,692 to 12,894, while the number of farms almost tripled
- The three Prairie Provinces accounted for almost 95 per cent of Canada's 2,937 acres of Saskatoon berries, with Alberta the main producer at 52 per cent

Should any clarification of how to access the web sites be required, contact Reynold Jaipaul at (780) 427-5376 or Marion Harry at (780) 427-9206

A full statistical portrait of Canadian agriculture and a comprehensive and analytical profile on the data released, is available on the Statistics Canada web site <http://www.statcan.ca/english/agcensus2001/index.htm>. Also, more free data are available in 17 tables for Canada and Provinces by clicking on the Canadian Statistics site.

*Contact Reynold Jaipaul*
*(780) 427-5376*

# Call Centre staffed with specialists

An Ag-Info Centre has been set up in Stettler to provide a way for members of Alberta's agriculture industry to access specialists, information and services within Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

"The Center is staffed with crop, beef and forage specialists and resource agents, formerly called client service representatives, from across Alberta," says Jim Proctor, management contact responsible for the Ag-Info Centre. "Call center staff are experienced at handling producer inquiries, from program information, production problems to diagnosing complex agricultural issues. They will also be able to direct callers to other specialists located across the province, as required."

A toll-free number has been set up for the Ag-Info Centre to ensure that all Alberta farm businesses can access the Centre as needed. The number is 1-866-882-7677.

Currently, the 'in-house' specialists and resource agents at the Centre are:

**Russel Horvey** – brings a wealth of personal and professional experience to the Centre. He has a Bachelor of Science in Animal Science degree from the University of Saskatchewan. After joining the Department in 1973, Horvey worked as a district agriculturist in Calgary, Three Hills and Hanna, and for several years worked as a soil and water conservation coordinator in Edmonton and Red Deer. More recently, he was a cereals and oilseeds specialist in Oyen and Three Hills. Throughout his career with Alberta Agriculture, the Horvey family has maintained a herd of purebred cattle, most recently being based in the Delburne area. At the Ag-Info Centre, Horvey will use his diverse background and skills to handle producers' beef and forage production concerns and will continue to expand his interests in organic farming as time allows.

**Susan Markus** – started work with Alberta Agriculture in 1994 as a beef specialist in the Coronation office. Prior to joining the Department, she worked as an agricultural representative in southern Manitoba. Markus has a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture degree from the University of Saskatchewan, a Masters in Livestock Nutrition from Manitoba, and a PhD in Animal Behavior from the University of Alberta. She comes from a large mixed farm in northern Manitoba, and presently ranches with her husband in east-central Alberta.

**Jay Byer** – a native born Albertan, brings to the Ag-Info Centre a wealth of experience in agricultural information. In the recent past, he has specialized in canola production and for a year worked as associate provincial oilseed specialist. Byer is currently spending much of his time investigating integrated methods of pest management. In addition to his responsibilities at the Ag-Info Centre, he will continue to work with Lakeland Applied Research Association and will have

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responsibilities as an extension agronomist with Alberta Agriculture. Byer has a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture degree from the University of Alberta.

**Jim Broatch** – joined Alberta Agriculture in 1997, originally working as a cereal and oilseed specialist in Provost, after years of being the Ag Fieldman for the County of Grande Prairie. In 2001, he was an integral part of the Cereal and Oilseed Helpline pilot project that has since become the Alberta Ag-Info Centre. Broatch has a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Manitoba and a Masters in Pest Management from Simon Fraser University. His strengths and primary interests are in entomology and integrated pest management, with special interests in the beneficial insects affecting pests in western Canadian field crop production systems.

**Leonna Lind** – is the Team Leader for the Ag-Info Centre. She was the project leader for the Cereal and Oilseed pilot project. Lind worked as client service representative in the Stettler District Office since 1994, and prior to that she was the RITE Operator in Stettler for 19 years.

**Marj Tunney** – has been with the provincial government for 23 years. For the last 15 years, she has been working as a client service representative with Alberta Agriculture in the Wainwright District Office.

**Jim Proctor** – is the management contact responsible for the Ag-Info Centre among other duties. He is the current chair of program information services. He has 18 years of experience with Alberta Agriculture as a district agriculturist, farm management specialist and manager.

**Deborah Heidt** – has worked as a client service representative for Alberta Agriculture since 1988, first in the Lacombe office and then the Stettler office. Heidt and her husband farm in the Mirror/Bashaw area.

**Ordella Knopf** – has moved to Stettler from the Peace Region, where she worked as a client service representative with Alberta Agriculture in Fairview since 1981.

**Brenda McLellan** – worked for many years in the livestock marketing services division, brands office. Most recently, she provided public and telephone service at the Alberta Agriculture Stettler District office for 4-H and industry development.

**Mark MacNaughton** – recently joined the Ag-Info Centre as a forage and beef specialist. He has extensive industry experience, has worked as a beef specialist (cow/calf) with Alberta Agriculture, has consulted with individuals and organizations on grazing and land management, and is involved with various groups on directing research for forages and livestock. MacNaughton has a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture from the University of Alberta, majoring in economics.

**Doon Pauly** – worked on the Cereal and Oilseed Helpline pilot project in 2001. He comes to Alberta Agriculture with extensive industry experience as a researcher and as a crop production specialist. Pauly has Bachelor of Science in Agriculture and Master of Science in Soil Fertility degrees, both from the University of Alberta. Soil fertility, fertilizer products and weed management are his primary areas of interest.

**Karla Barmentloo** – comes to the Ag-Info Centre with previous Alberta Agriculture experience as a cereal and oilseed specialist in Provost. Prior to joining Alberta Agriculture, Barmentloo worked in Manitoba with DuPont and in Saskatchewan with Agriculture Canada and Cargill. She has her Bachelor of Science in Agriculture with an Agriculture Economics major from the University of Saskatchewan. Barmentloo's strengths are in pests and pest management and she has special interests in special crops.

For the planting season, the Alberta Ag-Info Centre has extended its hours. The Alberta Centre will have crop specialists available from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m., Monday to Friday except statutory holidays, until July 15, 2002. These extended hours will help producers to access a crop specialist with the toll-free call from anywhere in the province during this busy time of the production year. The number, again, is 1-866-882-7677.

Due to the late spring, crop specialists have received mostly fertilizing and seeding questions. The number of weed and pest control inquiries – especially grasshopper – questions will undoubtedly increase dramatically in the next few weeks. Producers can inquire about weed and pest management, including counts and methods of control from the crop specialists at the Alberta Ag-Info Centre.

In addition to the resource centre, producers can continue to access information on Alberta Agriculture's web site, located at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca>. This site features many tools and resources and is continually being updated.

*Contact:* *Jim Proctor*
*(403) 340-7613*

Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside the Red Deer area

## New resources offer farm direct marketing edge

We can't be experts at everything, but setting up networks and surrounding ourselves with like-minded people creates a great business advantage and can help develop that slight edge.

"Alberta Agriculture's Farm Direct Protein team put that concept into practice this winter when they met with farm direct marketers to discuss the marketing requirements of farm direct marketed beef, poultry and dairy products," says Karen Goad, industry development officer with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Grande Prairie.

*Cont'd on page 5*

Three new factsheets are available free from Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office by phoning 1-800-292-5697:

- ***Direct Marketing Profit$ - Beef*** (Agdex #420/821-3)
- ***Direct Marketing Profit$ - Poultry*** (Agdex #450/821-1)
- ***Direct Marketing Profit$ - Cheese Production*** (Agdex #410/821-3)

Discussions with farm direct operators indicated a need for information on marketing costs. The fact sheets were developed in response to this need. The information for each sector was generated by a group of producer/marketers who arrived at a consensus of opinion concerning the investment, production, marketing requirements, costs and revenues associated with developing a viable direct market protein enterprise. The fact sheets include projected profitability of direct market protein operations, expected processing and marketing costs and labor requirements as well as other key economic, production and marketing parameters.

Processing and marketing costs, while big issues to any meat producer marketing direct to the consumer, are only part of the picture. To help new agri-preneurs establish a successful farm direct operation, a Farm Direct Marketing Protein Checklist is also being developed. This checklist will assist in deciding whether marketing meat products directly to the consumer is for you. It is a resource that will help producers look at their products, on farm production practices, processing, marketing and business management strategies. Together, do they offer what your customer wants? Do they define what makes your products special, unique or different in the eyes of your consumer?

The Farm Direct Protein team continues to meet with direct market producers to identify industry challenges and initiate their resolution. Processing is a big issue for farm direct marketers, as are transportation, networking and co-operative marketing arrangements. Facilitating discussions between producers and processors is one of the main functions of the Farm Direct Protein Team. It is very encouraging to see that both of these sectors are interested in helping the industry grow.

Farm direct is a niche market, but it's a growing one. You have to like people to be successful in farm direct marketing. If you aren't a 'people person', consider pursuing other opportunities to market your products.

For information on the Farm Direct Protein team initiative, give Goad a call at (780) 538-5629, Grande Prairie. For toll free access, dial 310-0000 first. The ***Direct Marketing Profit$*** factsheets are available from Alberta Agriculture's Publication Office, 7000 – 113 Street, Edmonton. For toll free access in Alberta, call 1-800-292-5697. The factsheets are also available by contacting the Farm Direct Protein Team members:

| | |
|---|---|
| Rod Carlyon & Kerry Engel | (780) 349-4466 – Westlock |
| Karen Goad | (780) 538-5629 – Grande Prairie |

For toll free access, dial 310-000 and follow the prompts.

*Contact:* *Karen Goad*
*(780) 538-5629*

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## Government battles drought with risk management plan

Alberta agricultural producers are assured of a coordinated response in the face of possible drought situations, thanks to Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Agriculture Drought Risk Management Plan (ADRMP).

"Alberta producers need to be more prepared and less vulnerable to drought conditions," says Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "Ad-hoc solutions are too costly and short-term. Producers need to be assured of pro-active, coordinated, ongoing and effective action on the part of the government. That's why we've developed the ADRMP."

The ADRMP outlines a strategic science-based approach for monitoring and predicting drought, as well as providing program options for drought response. The plan, developed with input from the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA), Alberta Environment, municipalities and other stakeholders, consists of three key components: drought preparedness, science-based moisture mapping and monitoring across the province, and a 'toolbox' of possible drought response options.

"The mapping and monitoring of soil moisture and precipitation would allow for a more effective and immediate response to possible drought conditions," adds McClellan. "By monitoring precipitation and soil moisture across Alberta through DroughtNet, not only can we better understand drought, we can take pro-active measures if and when drought occurs."

Having a 'toolbox' of response options allows the province to collaborate with municipalities to choose the right response for a particular area. Possible drought response options range from pro-active measures during the first signs of a drought to financial stabilization during and following drought. The province's grasshopper control program, announced recently, is an example of a response option.

The Alberta Drought Management Committee (ADMC) will coordinate the ADRMP. This committee will consist of representatives from Alberta Environment, PFRA, Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC) and Alberta Agriculture. ADMC will collect, analyze and distribute drought-related data, develop and deliver drought-preparedness information to

*Cont'd on page 6*

agricultural producers and recommend delivery of drought-related programs. As well, representatives from affected municipalities will join the ADMC if their area is affected by dry conditions.

"Alberta is taking a proactive approach to drought response," says Lorne Taylor, Minister of Alberta Environment. "We will also visit this issue as we develop a government-wide water management strategy that will ensure Albertans continue to have access to safe and sustainable water supplies for years to come."

Copies of the ADRMP strategic plan are available by contacting Alberta Agriculture's Rural Services Division at (780) 422-9167, toll-free by calling 310-0000. Copies of the plan are also available on Alberta Agriculture's web site at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca>.

*Contact:* *Lloyd Andruchow*
*Head – Program Policy and Evaluation Branch*
*Rural Services Division*
*Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Developement*
*(780) 427-3338*

For toll-free information outside of Edmonton, dial 310-0000

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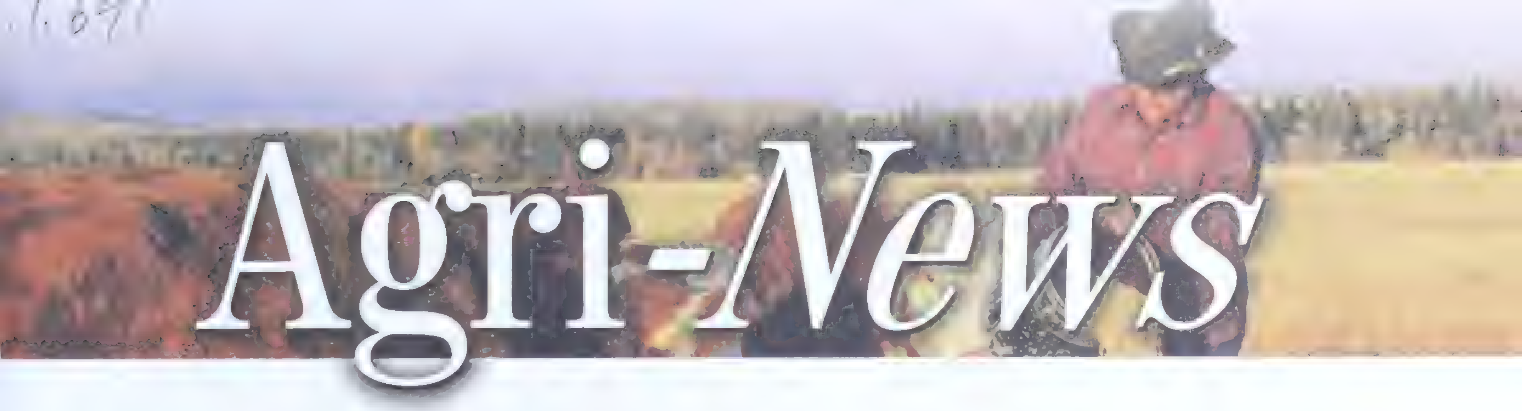
# Agri-News Briefs

## Computer use on Alberta farms

According to the 2001 Statistics Canada Census, only about 41 per cent of Alberta farm businesses use a computer as a management tool to run their business. This number has nearly doubled since 1996, when only 23 per cent of Alberta farms used computers for farm business. Of this 41 per cent of Alberta's farms, in 2001, 78 per cent of the farmers who use the computers use them for bookkeeping, 72 per cent for surfing the internet, and about 69 per cent used them for word processing. Also, 84 per cent of farming operations that use a computer used it for more than one application. While these numbers are increasing, the number of Alberta farms using the internet for business purposes is still less than 30 per cent of the Alberta farm community.



# Agri-News

June 10, 2002

## Fusarium testing program ending

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Fusarium testing program will end on June 30, 2002.

The voluntary testing program was introduced on March 5, 2001 to test samples of wheat and barley for the presence of fusarium *graminearum*. The program cost shared the expense of the tests, with the producer paying $20 and Alberta Agriculture paying $25. Initially, the program was to run until June 30, 2001, or until the budget had been spent. Approximately 500 samples were submitted for testing during that period

On July 1, 2001 the program was renewed, as there was still funding available. The program was expanded to test all cereals, including corn. All of the participating labs were trained by the Canadian Grain Commission to ensure testing procedures were standardized.

By the time the program will end, it is projected that more than 2,500 samples will have been submitted. Bill Witbeck, provincial seed specialist with Alberta Agriculture, is pleased that the industry recognized the value of the program and had their product tested. "Fusarium is such a devastating disease to the grain industry," says Witbeck. "It's clear that industry recognizes the threat of this disease and is just as concerned about its potential impact."

While the program is ending, in no way should the testing for fusarium stop. "We still need to be vigilant about keeping this disease out of Alberta, so producers should continue to get their feed or seed tested for fusarium," says Witbeck.

Testing will still be available at the same labs that participated in the cost-sharing program. However, after June 30, 2002, producers will be responsible for the full cost of the test.

Contact numbers for the Alberta laboratories that provide Fusarium *graminearum* testing:

- **BioVision Seed Research Ltd**
  9954 - 67 Avenue
  Phone: (780) 436-8822 / 1-800-952-5407
  Edmonton, Alberta T6E 0P5
- **20/20 Seed Labs Ltd.**
  Suite 201, 509 - 11 Avenue
  Phone: (780) 955-3435/1-877-420-2099
  Nisku, Alberta T9E 7N5

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## This Week

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Internet site: www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agrinews Editor e-mail: agrinews@gov.ab.ca
Alberta AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Parkland Laboratories**
  5410 Gaetz Avenue
  Phone: (403) 342-0404
  Red Deer, Alberta T4N 4B7
- **Precision Seed Testing**
  Box 210
  Phone: (403) 354-2259/1-800-379-4804
  Beaverlodge, Alberta T0H 0C0

*Contact: Billy Witbeck* *Shaffeek Ali*
*(403) 782-4641* *(780) 422-4909*

## Growth staging critical to weed control in field pea crops

Spraying of weeds in field pea crops is, or soon will be, under way in many parts of the province. There are number of factors to consider when spraying field peas. The most over looked one, is determining the growth stage of the crop to spray at. Although field pea crops have been grown in Alberta for over 15 years, there are still farmers and agronomists alike who don't know how to properly stage field pea and this is critical for crop safety and optimum weed control.

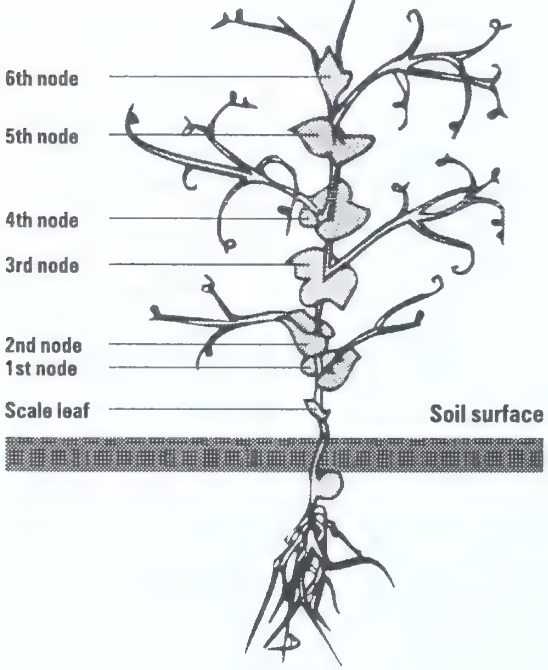
“Plant height, mistakenly, is often used to determine growth stage of the crop but it is a poor indicator since the distance between leaf pairs, sometimes referred to as nodes, varies between types, varieties and with growing conditions,” says Mark Olson, extension agronomist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Pulse and Oilseeds Unit, Edmonton. “Under dry conditions, field pea crops can be quite advanced in their growth stage but short in height. As well, normal leaf types will have a greater distance between leaf pairs versus the semi leafless types. This means that at the same height the two field pea types or varieties could be at two totally different growth stages.”

When determining growth stage, farmers need to know that the first leaves seen soon after emergence of the crop are called scale leaves and are not to be counted. These leaves can be distinguished from the true leaves in that scale leaves are small, pointy and close to the stem. When crop scouting, be sure to check at least a half dozen or more stops in the field to get an idea of the average growth stage.

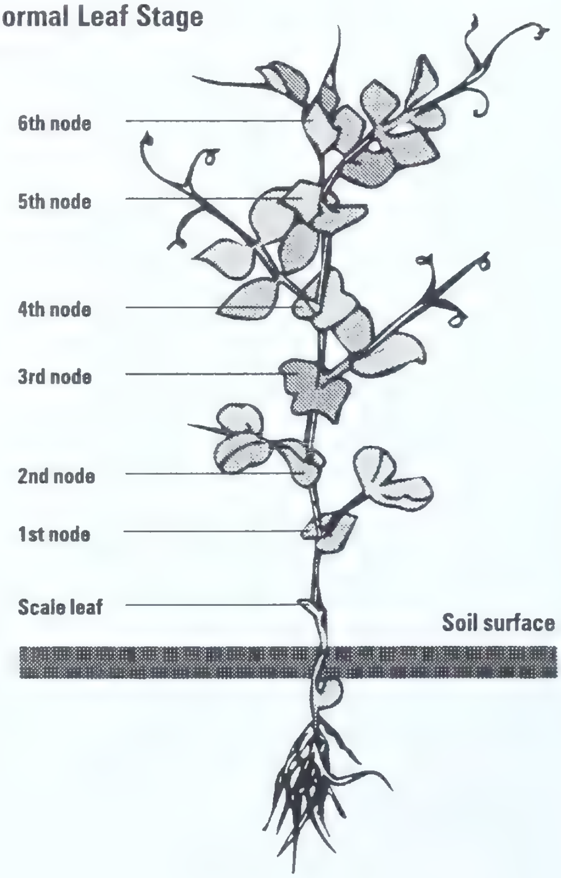
Spraying field peas early, around the two to four node growth stage, will decrease the chance of crop damage and has yield benefits as well. Field peas do not provide a competitive crop canopy early on in its growth and, therefore, weed growth is greater. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada researchers in Lacombe and Lethbridge found field pea yield declined for every week spraying was delayed one week after emergence. Waiting four weeks after emergence resulted in a 25 per cent penalty in yield.

“The window of opportunity for spraying field pea crops is quite small,” adds Olson. “Dependent on growing conditions, peas will grow about two leaf pairs or nodes per week. This leaves little room for error in determining growth stage.”

**Semi-leafless Type**



**Normal Leaf Stage**



*Cont'd on page 3*

These diagrams showing pea node leaf staging may be found on page 6 of Alberta Agriculture's ***Crop Protection 2002***, sometimes more commonly referred to as the *Blue Book*.

Copies of ***Crop Protection 2002*** are available from Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, or by calling (780) 427-0391 in the Edmonton area or toll free in Alberta at 1-800-292-5697. Cost of the ***Blue Book*** is $10 plus GST. For mail orders or phone orders, please add $2 plus GST for shipping and handling. MasterCard and VISA are accepted.

For more information on spraying of field pea call the Ag Info Center at 1-866-882-7677.

*Contact: Mark Olson*
*(780) 422-3825*

## Grand re-opening of the FPDC

Smaller entrepreneurs are creating 100 tantalizing, new food products annually at Alberta's newly expanded, world-class food processing development centre. The expansion to Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Food Processing Development Centre (FPDC) in Leduc was officially unveiled on May 29, 2002

When shopping at the local grocery store or visiting a favorite restaurant, you may have noticed some exciting new additions to the menu and product choices. If so, you might very well be tantalizing your taste buds with one of the more than 100 new products that reach Canadian grocery shelves or restaurant tables annually from the FPDC.

Located in Leduc, the Province of Alberta constructed the centre in 1984 through the Alberta Heritage Trust Fund. The multi-million dollar centre was created to assist small entrepreneurs in moving their menu and product ideas out of their dreams and into the market. The centre, a Canadian Food Inspection Agency registered facility, provides companies and individuals affordable access to product development, testing, processing and packaging facilities. The new $4 million expansion and redevelopment includes a 1,500 square metre addition, plus the purchase of $1.5 million in new equipment This places the centre as a leader in value-added food and beverage technology and development

Centre clients can hire use of the facilities as well as the research and development expertise of its scientists on a fee-for-service basis. This enables many start-up and existing companies to develop or improve, produce and launch products from the Centre until they are in a position to set up their own processing facilities

"Companies from across the U.S. and Canada are testing, developing and packaging their products at our facility," says Ron Pettitt, Director of the Food Processing Division. "Our ability to assist with such a wide range of products and processes involving frozen, fresh, baked, fried, steam distilled and even extruded items, enables users to explore and develop an extensive range of products." Pettitt says many companies recognize the advantage of using the facility since they are able to research and develop new products and processes more cost-effectively than in their own facilities. This makes it very desirable for companies to not only travel to Alberta for their product development and processing, but is also a real incentive to relocate here.

Exciting new products have been created for the home meal replacement market that feature ready-to-serve gourmet seasoned roasts, delectable appetizers and the best pies that only your grandma could make. New food creations such as exotic marinades, salsas, spice rubs featuring unique blends like lavender citrus or wild porcini mushrooms with spices, and unique appetizers are allowing consumers at home or foodservice operators to economically reproduce some of the most exquisite dishes previously available only to diners at the finest restaurants

From innovative twists for refreshing new juices to spicy ideas with honey, the centre's state-of-the-art sensory/taste testing lab will ensure those great ideas are exactly what consumers are yearning for. Even the family dog has been a winner at Leduc with the creation of a gourmet dog biscuit product. Soon, many time-strapped Canadians will be able to supplement their breakfasts on-the-go with the latest nutraceutical products developed from Alberta grown oats.

In addition, other exciting innovations feature improved food storage capabilities, extended shelf-life, and a host of other packaging and processing technologies that are providing solutions for whole-health care, bio-energy alternative fuel sources, and bio-composite materials for a variety of applications.

*Contact: Ron Pettitt*
*(780) 980-4862*

Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton

## FPDC a great resource for Alberta entrepreneurs

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Food Processing Development Centre (FPDC) in Leduc has successfully developed more than 750 new value-added food, beverage and alternative agricultural value-added products and processes since it opened in 1984. New additions to the Centre feature improved food storage capabilities, computerized sensory evaluation laboratory, extended shelf-life, and a host of other packaging and processing technologies that are providing solutions for value-added food products including meats, whole-health care, and bio-composite materials for a variety of applications.

*Cont'd on page 4*

The Centre serves more than 250 clients each year. In the value-added food and beverage processing area, small entrepreneurs are creating 100 new food products annually that reach consumers throughout the world. Several of these successes have established some of Alberta's best-known food processors as market leaders.

**Centre Capabilities**

Experienced scientists and technology staff, plus state-of-the-art equipment are available in each of these areas: meat processing; dairy; thermal processing; milling, dry blending and fractionation; separation and extraction of protein or other components of agricultural products; extrusion processing; drying – tray, fluidized bed, spray; baking; packaging – liquid and solid; coating and frying; flash freezing; and, sensory evaluation.

Programs available for using agricultural products in manufacturing:

- product development and processing of crops and meat for food, feed, non-food (industrial applications) pharmaceutical and functional (nutraceutical) food applications
- product and process development, interim processing
- advice for setting up food processing facilities, including equipment
- development of new packaging technologies, plus advice on packaging and labeling
- shelf-life evaluations
- assessment of consumer acceptance of products through sensory evaluations
- development and manufacturing of bio-plastics
- developments in the cosmetic and health care industries, both for human and animal needs.

Crop product development and processing program:

- product and process development for a wide range of crop products including cereals, oilseeds, special crops, legumes, and horticulture crops
- products created include breads and other baked goods, noodles, snack foods and ready-to-eat breakfast cereals, animal and aquaculture feeds, texturized vegetable proteins

Meat processing program:

- the Centre is a registered Canadian Food Inspection Agency facility, this means that products developed at the Centre can be shipped for inter-provincial or export trade
- meat scientists at the Centre have expertise in development of a wide variety of new products, from concept through to prototype development, plant scale-up and interim processing needs
- equipped to carry out every type of further processing of meat including whole muscle processing, further processed meat such as chopped and formed meat products, smoked meats, mixed-ingredient food products, innovative processes and uses for less tender cuts, byproducts, processing waste
- extensive home meal replacement opportunities
- packaging technologies

Wet processing program:

- processing of dairy products, fruit, vegetable, herbal, and other products
- beverages
- sauces, preserves
- extractions of components for cosmetics and nutraceutical/functional foods

Extrusion processing program:

- clients have the opportunity to explore new ideas, processing methods, and to produce new experimental crop based foods/feeds/fibres
- products created include: ready-to-eat cereals, snack foods, texturized vegetable proteins, snack bars, livestock feed, aquaculture and specialty diets; industrial applications including ingredient extractions, fibre and biodegradable packaging; pharmaceutical products and functional food applications
- equipment for extruding, milling, dry-blending, pre-conditioning, cutting, drying, toasting, cooling and vacuum tumbling are available at the Centre

Some of the many product successes at the Centre:

- Fabko Foods (Bassili's Best Lasagne) – plus other frozen prepared dishes
- Cattle Boyz – BBQ sauce and other gourmet sauces
- Cari-Bay Fine Foods – seasoned chicken and pork products, featuring regional flavours
- CeaPro Inc. – health care products and nutritional supplements derived from oats
- Cassidy Creek Trading – specialty gourmet preserves, sauces and butters
- Harimex – creators of Fibrimex fresh meat binding system for beef, pork, poultry and seafood
- Select Food Services – home meal replacement dishes featuring specialty entrees for take-out
- Country Mom Foods Limited – stuffed puff pastry products including poultry dressing rolls

*Cont'd on page 5*

- Other clients include: Schneiders meats, Old Dutch Foods, Heritage Foods and Maple Leaf Foods

*Contact:* *Ron Pettitt*
*(780) 980-4862*

For toll-free information outside of Edmonton, dial 310-0000

## Steel new AFSC president

Bringing a wealth of agriculture and risk management experience to his new position, Alan Steel joined Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC) as its president and managing director on May 27, 2002.

Steel leaves Ontario where he served as CEO of Agricorp, an organization that provides risk management tools and customized consulting services for that province's agriculture and food industry. Steel's background includes four deputy minister postings for the Province of Nova Scotia, including Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Marketing. He also worked on a special project for the Ontario Tobacco Board.

Steel will direct the day-to-day management of AFSC and work with its Board of Directors and executive members to align strategic plans with the long-term needs of AFSC's customers.

Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, says Steel's agricultural background will hold him in good stead with Alberta producers.

"Alan will be responsible for nurturing positive relationships with AFSC customers, commodity groups, agribusinesses, rural businesses and other stakeholders," says McClellan. "We will look to him for innovative made-in-Alberta solutions that are right for the times and right for our AFSC clients."

AFSC is a crown corporation providing a broad range of financial and risk management services. It is governed by a Board of Directors, who report to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

*Contact* *Robert Splane*
*Chairman of the Board*
*AFSC*
*(403) 782-8309*

Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton

## $5,000 levied in fines for selling uninspected meat

"Three substantial fines recently imposed on a Peace River area resident should act as a deterrent for others tempted to sell uninspected meat," says Cliff Munroe, head of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Regulatory Service Branch.

The fined individual, pleaded guilty to selling uninspected meat and running an abattoir without a licence. It is illegal to sell meat that has not been inspected in a meat facility licensed by Alberta Agriculture or a federally registered establishment.

"Albertans have a right to know their food is safe," says Munroe. "We have strict rules to safeguard the public and we expect them to be followed in full. Alberta has one of the best reputations in the world for producing high quality safe food. Our industry has worked hard to achieve this status. We have to be diligent in retaining our national and international standing."

An Alberta Agriculture Prevention/Investigation Unit was formed in 1999 to handle compliance of all food safety regulations. Its first course of action in investigating complaints is to inform individuals that their activities are illegal. If the individual doesn't voluntary cease the activity, charges are then laid

Munroe adds that all meat sold in the province must go through a rigorous inspection prior to being offered to the public for sale. Safeguards include inspection programs by the Regional Health Authorities, Alberta Agriculture and, in the case of federally registered establishments, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

The fines were for two counts of selling uninspected meat under the *Meat Inspection Act*, and one count of illegally operating an abattoir.

*Contact:* *Cliff Munroe*
*(780) 422-7249*

# *The rewards and risks of using land rollers*

The use of land rollers in annual crop production continues to increase as farmers reap the rewards at harvest time. However, if land rolling is not done correctly it also dramatically increases the risk of soil erosion and related damage to the emerging crop.

"The greatest benefit from land rolling comes from being able to improve harvest efficiency," says Rick Taillieu, agronomist with Alberta Reduced Tillage LINKAGES program, Olds. "Land rolling will push the majority of the rocks back into the soil, allowing farmers to harvest closer to the surface. Land rolling also helps smooth out the field for subsequent operations, such as spraying."

Growers of pulse crops, such as field peas, often need to harvest close to the ground to maximize yield. Pulse crops are often short where it is dry and lodging can be a problem where it is wet. Similarly, feedlot operators want to be able to maximize tonnage by harvesting the optimum amount of silage crops by swathing very close to the surface. In these cases, land rollers will help reduce the risk of picking up rocks or putting excessive soil through the combine or forage harvester.

"Land rolling, however, can be a major cause of soil erosion when done prior to crop emergence," adds Taillieu. "Every tillage operation contributes to breaking down soil particle size and leaves less protective residue on the surface. Land rollers can pulverize the soil, especially under dry conditions. Without any anchored stubble to slow the surface wind speed, these small soil particles blow very easily. The same field under wet conditions will also have a lower water infiltration rate, making it highly susceptible to water erosion in the absence of surface protection."

The best way to benefit from rolling while reducing erosion risk is to direct seed. Land rolling is widely used by farmers who are reducing their tillage. The stubble must be anchored in order to slow down the wind speed on the surface. Direct seeding increases soil organic matter, soil aggregate size, and water infiltration rates. Make planning your stubble part of planning the crop rotation to ensure land that will be rolled will still be protected.

"For producers who aren't direct seeding, the best way to reduce their risks from rolling is to be patient," says Taillieu. "Producers should consider waiting for crop emergence before rolling. Peas, for example, can be rolled up to the six-node stage. Rolling after the dew is off and before the heat of the day can reduce physical damage to the crop. For crops that may already be stressed from a recent herbicide application, rolling should be delayed for a few days to allow the plants to recover.

"There is also some risk of spreading disease by post emergent rolling under wet, humid conditions. Consider not rolling the field from corner to corner. Avoid erosion prone land such as hilltops and field margins that are often the starting points of wind and water erosion."

For more information on sustainable cropping systems visit the Reduced Tillage web site at <www.reducedtillage.ca>.

*Contact:* *Rick Taillieu*
*(403) 556-8235*

# Agri-News Briefs

## Make it, bake it or grow it

July 14-21, 2002 is Farmers' Market Awareness Week in Alberta. Alberta approved farmers' markets are the place to find the freshest locally grown produce, new food products, Alberta produced meats and cheeses, unique work by local crafters, and lots of friendly faces waiting to serve you. The Farmers' Market Association of Alberta (FMAA) sees the Farmers' Market Awareness Week as an opportunity to salute the growers, producers, artists, and craftspeople that are the foundation of local economies and communities. It recognizes the significant place that markets have as tourist attractions and community institutions. There are currently over 110 approved farmers' markets in Alberta. Each has unique vendors, customers and a special atmosphere that encourages you to "come for the freshness and stay for the fun". For further information, contact Penny Wilkes (780) 427-4514 or Jackie Lacey (403) 933-5462.

## Food safety info meeting

The Food Safety Info Society is holding their annual meeting on June 19, 2002 at the Alberta Poultry Research Centre, 115 St. and 60th Ave., Edmonton, Alberta. The meeting will run from 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Albertans interested in learning more about this valuable consumer service are invited to attend Please RSVP to the Food Safety Info Line 1-800-892-8333. For further information, contact the Food Safety Info Line, by phone at the toll free number, by mail - Box 21, Site 1, R.R. # 7, Calgary, Alberta T2P 2G7, or by fax (403) 569-1074.

## Weed management home study course

The home study program of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has just released ***Weed Management***, a comprehensive weed management course for farmers and trainers. Written by Dr. Mirza N. Baig, an internationally recognized expert in the area of weed control, the course has 17 modules, a planning book and an optional final exam. After completing the course, farmers will be able to:

- identify weeds at seedling and maturity
- estimate crop losses due to weeds
- keep records of past weed control practices
- apply various methods of weed control
- assess factors that affect herbicide performance
- select suitable formulations
- take steps to avoid herbicide resistance
- use herbicides in a safe manner.

This course examines such emerging trends as using herbicides at reduced rates, weed control in direct seeding and minimum tillage systems, herbicide resistant crops and aerial application of herbicides. A key component of the course is a separate planning book that farmers can use to design an ongoing weed management plan for their farm. The planning book allows farmers to record weed control measures they've taken in the past and plan for the future. The price of the course is $60 plus GST. To order the course using a credit card, call the order line at: (780) 427-2404. To order the course by mail, send a cheque to Home Study Program, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, 2nd Floor, 7000 - 113 St., Edmonton, Alberta T6H 5T6. For more information, call (780) 427-4309 or email: <home.study@agric.gov.ab.ca> or visit the web site at: <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/homestudy>.

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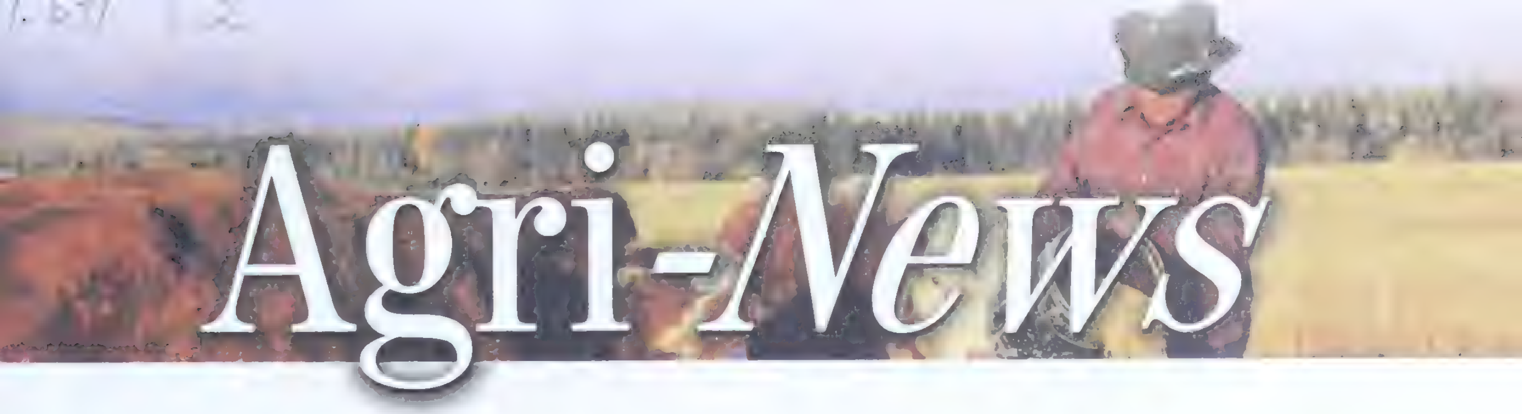

June 17, 2002

## Dutch Elm Disease Awareness Week June 24 - 30

"Alberta is constantly aware of the threat of Dutch Elm Disease (DED) which presses its borders from two sides, Saskatchewan and Montana," says Janet Feddes-Calpas, integrated pest management technologist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "DED has killed millions of elms throughout North America since 1930, when it was first introduced by infected wood from Europe. The Society to Prevent Dutch Elm Disease (STOPDED), with the cooperation of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, is focusing on the prevention of this deadly disease. Public awareness is a key component to the success of the program."

Dutch Elm Disease Awareness Week in Alberta is June 24 to 30, 2002. In order to help save the just over a half a million elms growing in Alberta, awareness must be raised on what DED is, the importance of elm trees to our communities, and that DED can be prevented. Albertans are asked to help save our beautiful American elm trees by taking the following preventive measures:

- keep your elm trees healthy and vigorous
- elm wood provides ideal breeding sites for the tiny elm bark beetle that spreads DED. Dispose of all elm wood by burning, burying or chipping it
- learn how to identify the signs of DED and beetle activity so that you can report them. Call Ag-Info Centre at 1-866-882-7677 to report symptoms or to find out your nearest DED hotline number. Symptoms usually appear in mid June to mid-July when the leaves wilt or droop, curl up and become brown. Leaves on trees infected later in the season usually turn yellow and drop prematurely. Leaf symptoms are accompanied by brown staining under the bark. All suspicious elms must be tested in a lab for the presence of the fungus. A confirmed DED tree must be removed immediately to prevent further spread
- water elms well from April to mid August. To allow the tree to harden off for the winter, watering should be stopped mid August followed by a good soaking or two before freeze-up

## This Week

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- dead branches and trees, which provide beetle habitat, should be removed. Since elm bark beetles are attracted to fresh tree wounds, pruning must only be done between October 1 to March 31 when the beetles are not in their active stage. Several municipalities already have an elm-pruning bylaw in place that would result in a fine if you prune an elm after March 31. DED, SEEBB and the NEBB are declared pests under the Agricultural Pests Act making it illegal to transport or store elm firewood. All pruned elm wood must be burned or buried to prevent the possible spread of DED
- become more involved in the preservation of our elm trees and become a STOPDED member.

**DO NOT!**

- store elm firewood at any time!
- ransport elm firewood!
- prune elms between April 1 and September 30!

"Municipal plantings of elm range from 10 to 50 per cent of the overall tree plantings," adds Feddes-Calpas. "Alberta cannot afford to lose a resource that provides so many environmental benefits. In Alberta landscaping, there is a very limited choice of trees, none of which approach the aesthetic beauty or suitability of the elm. Without an on-going continuous prevention program, the entire population of elms in a community could easily be lost within a few short years."

DED is a disease caused by a fatal fungus that clogs the elm tree's water conducting system, causing its leaves to wilt and the tree to die, usually within one or two seasons. The fungus that affects all species of elm is primarily spread from one tree to another by two species of insect vectors, the smaller European elm bark beetle (SEEBB), and the native elm bark beetle (NEBB). The beetles are attracted to weak and dying trees, which serve as breeding sites for the beetles. Once the beetles have pupated and turned into adults they leave the brood gallery and fly to healthy elms to feed, thus transporting the fungus on their bodies from one tree to the next.

"For this reason, it is important that elm firewood not be transported into or within Alberta as the wood may be harboring the bark beetles that carry the deadly DED fungus," cautions Feddes-Calpas. "Firewood is confiscated at all the Alberta-Montana border crossings. Monitoring for the beetle is done every year throughout the province."

Alberta has been fortunate to remain DED free for many years however, in 1998 an isolated case of the disease was confirmed in Wainwright. The tree was immediately removed and burned. It is believed that firewood brought into the province was the source of infection. In previous years SEEBB have been found in Calgary, Edmonton, St. Albert, Red Deer, Strathcona County, Vauxhall, High River, Coutts, Killam, Taber, Medicine Hat, and Lloydminster. In 2001 SEEBB have been found on sticky traps in Calgary, Edmonton, Lloydminster, Coutts, Taber, and Wetaskiwin.

All the municipalities in the province are encouraged to develop a DED prevention program, which involves monitoring for the vectors, DED surveillance, public awareness, firewood control, and pruning of dead wood out of the elms between the dates of October 1 and March 31. For more information on DED prevention, check out the DED web site at: <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/pests/diseases/ded/html>.

*Contact: Janet Feddes-Calpas*
*(780) 422-7199*

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# Summer Field Days at the Crop Diversification Centres

More Albertans are getting back to nature and indulging in orchard and bush fruit gardening every year. Because of this increased interest, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centres and the Fruit Growers Society of Alberta (FGAA) are offering two field days of instruction focusing on orchards.

"Summer Field Days gives hands-on demonstrations to assist Albertans in orchard planting and tending," says Joyce Megson, executive director of the FGSA, Bentley. "We have planned two field days, one for the southern part of the province and one for the north-central area. At both, a panel of speakers will certainly provide valuable and expert information to attendees on how to better manage and maintain their orchard."

Instruction at the field days will include:

- **Spraying** – safe use of equipment and chemicals. Calibration and application techniques – Thean Pheh
- **Drip Irrigation** – increasing yields and profit with the use of irrigation – Dr. Chris Neeser
- **Weed Management** – giving your crop a fighting chance – Dr. Chris Neeser
- **Integrated Pest Management** – Dr. Ken Fry will discuss and demonstrate how to manage the pests in an orchard
- **Grafting and Pruning** – Thean Pheh will demonstrate techniques for grafting and pruning
- **Cover Crops** – what cover crops to use, where to use them, and when they are best used – Dr. Chris Neeser

**Note:** Some programs may be subject to slight change

"The Summer Field Days will be held on June 22, 2002 in Brooks at the Crop Diversification Centre South, and on July 6, 2002 in Edmonton at the Crop Diversification Centre North," adds Megson. "Both field days will start at 10 a.m. and run until 5:00 p.m. Registration will commence at 9:30 a.m."

*Cont'd on page 3*

Registration cost is $25 per person per event for FGSA members or $40 per person for both events, or a Silent Auction item donation (minimum value of $30). For non-members, registration cost is $35 per person per event or Silent Auction item donation (minimum value $40). Lunch will be provided and is covered as part of the registration cost.

Pre-registration is requested as space is limited. To pre-register, contact Megson at (403) 748-2289 or email <megsonj@telusplanet.net>. Registration can be completed at the event.

*Contact:* *Joyce Megson*
*(403) 748-2289*

## AVAC investment helps another company

AVAC Ltd., a corporation focused on adding value to agriculture products, has made a $13,750 investment under its *Idea Builder* program to help an ice cream treat enter the Canadian market and the manufacturing company establish a facility in Alberta.

"*Idea Builder* was launched in June 2001 to provide matching project capital for smaller, early stage projects that add value to agricultural commodities," says Joyce Lencucha, agri-food development specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and new venture development officer for AVAC Ltd., Red Deer. "This successful applicant is Dots Canada Inc., an Alberta subsidiary company of Amusements International Ltd. Dots Canada aims to manufacture and market Dippin' Dots® – a unique ice cream treat in Canada."

"AVAC's investment will assess the feasibility of economically producing Dippin' Dots® in Canada. We hope to establish a manufacturing plant here in Alberta for Canada-wide distribution," comments Cory Campbell, CEO of Dots Canada Inc.

Dippin' Dots® are tiny bead like ice cream formations that are cryogenically frozen. According to Campbell, cryogenics is commonly referred to as the process of flash freezing. The product is produced by subjecting it to a -182°C (-320°F) nitrogen-based freezing technique. As a result, the properties of the ice cream changes, resulting in tiny bead-like formations that lock in flavour and freshness.

"By creating the product in this way, and storing it at a low temperature (-40°C) the product's shelf life has proven to be over three years," adds Campbell. "Many freezer burn issues associated with common ice cream products are eliminated."

Based on favourable findings of the feasibility study, Dots Canada will select anAlberta dairy partner and build a manufacturing facility in the province

"This is an exciting value-added project and a great opportunity for an Alberta dairy producer. Dots Canada is predicting Canadian market demand per year for Dippin' Dots® will require in excess of 800,000 litres of milk, and potential export markets could greatly enhance this number," says Joyce Lencucha.

"An Alberta-based Dippin' Dots® production facility would create jobs for Albertans and save money when compared to importing from the U.S.," says Campbell.

Dippin' Dots® are expected to be test marketed this summer in various locations including the Calgary Stampede and throughout Quebec at many fairs and festivals. Dippin' Dots® have been sold in the U.S. since 1989 and are currently distributed at waterparks, amusement parks, major tourist attractions, airports, shopping centres, arenas and stadiums. It is expected that similar venues will be targeted in Canada.

AVAC's *Idea Builder* program provides streamlined access to seed capital for early stage, smaller projects that add value to agricultural commodities. Projects may include ideas such as new food and health products, marketing innovations and breakthroughs in food processing technologies.

AVAC invests in innovative ideas that add value to agricultural commodities. These investments can be through coaching, knowledge, contacts and financial resources. AVAC's mission is to help accelerate the growth of agrivalue™ in Alberta. Created in 1997, AVAC has to date committed over $15 million to agrivalue™ initiatives

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*jlencucha@avacltd.com*

*Cory Campbell*
*CEO*
*Dots Canada Inc*
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*cory@dippindots.ca*

## Weed management course

In addition to being a resource for farmers, the newly released home study course, ***Weed Management***, is an excellent tool for training employees in the area of weed management and herbicide control

The course includes 17 modules, a *Planning Book*, and an optional final exam leading to a certificate for those who obtain marks of 65 per cent or greater.

*Cont'd on page 4*

"The course begins with an introduction to weed problems in general, and the situation on the Canadian prairies in particular," says Lois Hameister, editor and educational designer with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Next, students are given a brief overview of weed biology and weed identification, particularly that of weed seedlings. Students can use this information to estimate crop losses and make good spraying decisions. Module 4 is devoted to the soil and its impact on weeds and herbicide effectiveness."

Part of weed control is accurate record keeping in order to monitor and control weeds on cropland. Depending on the situation, the most appropriate control method may be physical, cultural or biological, or any combination of these methods.

Modules 5 to 9 examine, in detail, characteristics of herbicides, herbicide formulations and selection, herbicide classification and all the factors affecting herbicide performance. These modules allow farmers to make optimal herbicide choices that suit their conditions yet at the same time minimize or prevent herbicide resistance.

Module 10 helps the farmer select the right type of application equipment. Calibration is covered in the module and in the *Planning Book*.

"Since biotechnology now has an increasing role in agriculture, the next module provides the information for farmers to make appropriate decisions regarding the use of herbicide-resistant crops," adds Hameister. "The next two modules deal with personal safety around pesticides and the legislation in Canada and Alberta surrounding their use."

The final three modules deal with special weed problems such as those found in shelterbelts or aquatic areas, the control of particularly troublesome weeds such as wild oats and green foxtail, and emerging trends in the area of reduced rates, reduced tillage and aerial application of herbicides.

Both farmers and employees will come away with an increased understanding of the complexity of weed management and the tools to make optimal decisions for their situation. The *Planning Book* allows farmers to design a weed management plan for their own farm.

The price of the course is $60 plus GST. To order the course using a credit card, call the order line at (780) 427-2404. To order the course by mail, send a cheque to Home Study Program, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, 2nd Floor, 7000 – 113 St., Edmonton, Alberta T6H 5T6. For more information, call the Home Study Program at (780) 427-4309, email <home.study@agric.gov.ab.ca> or visit the web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/homestudy>.

*Contact:* *Lois Hameister*
*(780) 427-4313*

# Food safety for Alberta's producers and processors

Tongue twisting names such as *E.coli*, *Salmonella*, *Listeria*, and *Campylobacter* have become household words. Reports of tainted hamburger, or imported raspberries contaminated with Cyclospora, routinely grab the headlines and consumer attention.

"As the frequency of food-borne illness identification increases, the question that arises is whether this is a new phenomenon or is science just better able to detect previously unidentified food-borne illnesses?" says Kerry Engel, member of the Ag Entrepreneurship Unit with Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development, Westlock. "New food-borne pathogens are being identified; improved detection capabilities can pinpoint lower concentrations of known pathogens; and, the aging population is more sensitive to food safety problems. All of these factors contribute to the seeming increase in news about food-borne illness."

There are also new threats from foods that were once thought to be safe. A recent case found E.coli contamination right in the heart of lettuce heads.

"It wasn't long ago that most people knew almost nothing about food safety," adds Engel. "Consumer awareness and knowledge of safe food handling practices have increased. Most consumers report they use safe handling practices such as keeping hands and surfaces clean and taking steps to prevent cross-contamination when preparing food. However, when observed, consumers do not always follow these practices."

Canadians expect safe food and demand to be protected from food safety risks. While new technologies for food safety exist, they are only one link in the safe food supply chain. From farmer to consumer, everyone must be responsible for food safety.

The next issue of the ***Alberta Agri-Preneur*** newsletter deals with on-farm food safety and the role producers and processors play in keeping Alberta's food supply safe. This issue takes a look at the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) system, a proactive program that can be implemented at all levels of the food supply, and On-Farm Food Safety programs that reassure consumers.

"The ***Alberta Agri-Preneur*** also gives ideas on how to incorporate food safety into a business image by highlighting ideas from Canada and France," says Engel. "The importance of food safety for agri-tourism operators can't be stressed enough. The newsletter includes information, tips and ideas for these agri-businesses, too."

The ***Alberta Agri-Preneur*** newsletter offers timely, incisive and creative ideas for the agriculture entrepreneur. It includes information on new markets, new trends, new directions for market focused agri-preneurs who create and develop new

*Cont'd on page 5*

products and enterprises, how to access new markets and/or add value to existing agricultural products. Back issues are available on the Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development web site at: <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/food/process/nwp/index.html>.

The ***Alberta Agri-Preneur*** is available free of charge. Contact Darleen Lynes at (780) 349-4466 to be put on the mailing list (dial 310-0000 for toll free service), or e-mail Engel at <kerry.engel@gov.ab.ca>.

*Contact:* *Kerry Engel*
*(780) 349-4466*
*Cell: (780) 349-9017*

## 4-H members bring country life to the city

4-H members will showcase their knowledge and abilities through a variety of projects at this year's ***Focus on 4-H*** program. This event will give over 500 members the opportunity to compete for various awards. ***Focus on 4-H*** will take place at Northlands Park in Edmonton from June 30 until July 2, 2002.

"Participants will compete in numerous project shows, workshops, educational events, and other activities," says Jocelyn McKinnon, regional 4-H specialist, Barrhead. "Members will exhibit 4-H projects that they have spent time developing over the last year. Highlights of the weekend include shows and competitions of horse, beef, goat and llama projects. As well, multi-species judging, crafts sessions, and canine costume competitions will take place. ***Focus on 4-H*** also welcomes a motivational guest speaker, and a special reining demonstration by Gold Medallists Cody Sapergia and his horse Sr. Cotton Candy." Another event, ***4-H Homecoming 2002*** will give members the chance to reunite with 4-H friends and meet new ones. The evening will include dinner, entertainment, and a time to share old memories. A silent auction and Lip Sync will also take place.

"All 4-H members and the general public are invited to attend this event. It's a wonderful chance to interact with the leaders of tomorrow, and learn more about 4-H and the benefits that it offers," adds McKinnon.

*Contact:* *Jocelyn McKinnon*
*(780) 674-8250 (toll free by dialing 310-0000)*

*Dave Armstrong*
*(780) 954-2601*

*Lorne or Flossie Bodell*
*(780) 467-2726*

## 4-H members active this summer

As school comes to a close, students ponder their summer plans. For many 4-H members, their summer is filled with project shows and camps. More than 1000 members from across the province will be gathering to attend various camps throughout their region and within the province.

"Leadership Through Counseling Seminar (LTCS) is the first major camp of the summer," says Mark Shand, provincial 4-H programs specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Airdrie. "This program educates youth by providing leadership skills, organizational skills, problem solving, and first aid among other areas. It will be held from July 1 to July 5, 2002. Delegates over the age of 16 unite at the Alberta 4-H Center, located on Battle Lake. Once delegates have acquired the beneficial knowledge from this program, they are able to counsel at numerous regional camps throughout the summer."

LTCS, sponsored by Alberta 4-H Program Trust, Agricore United, Agrium, Peavey Mart, Olds College and Wetaskiwin Cooperative Association Limited, will ultimately teach delegates that teamwork and trust are important features in making the summer camps enjoyable and educational for fellow delegates.

"We hope to instill a sense of accomplishment and be able to prepare the delegates for their counseling assignments this summer. Providing the delegates with the opportunity to have fun, meet new people and learn new skills is probably our main goal for the summer and this camp," adds Dale Sandberg, provincial 4-H program assistant, with Alberta Agriculture, Airdrie.

There is expected to be around 74 delegates at this year's LTCS from all over the province. The theme for LTCS this year, ***Making The Right Call***, revolves around a general sports focus. Delegates at LTCS engage in sessions aimed at increasing their skills, something that will truly aid them in 'making the right call'.

Some new and spectacular events that are happening at this year's LTCS include the *Survivor Experience Challenge* and the *4-H Summer Olympic Games*. Along with these new events, the most exciting and wonderful addition to LTCS this summer is the staff, which includes Deanna Vogel, Michael Vogel and Dale Sandberg.

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*(403) 948-8508*

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# Agri-News Briefs

## SPCA re-opens northern Alberta office

A new Alberta SPCA office recently opened in Grande Prairie replacing the former Fairview office that was closed in 2001. This Northern regional office, in conjunction with the head office in Edmonton, southern regional office in Strathmore and the central regional office in Red Deer will help the Alberta SPCA provide efficient, effective animal protection services across the province. Special Constable Julie Goforth has been hired to conduct investigations and inspections out of the Grande Prairie office. Goforth has a strong animal welfare background and has worked extensively with horses. She spent the past three years as a constable with the Grande Prairie & District SPCA. This new office and a new three-year livestock protection services contract between the Alberta SPCA and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development enhance the Society's ability to enforce animal welfare legislation province-wide. The Alberta SPCA – Northern Regional Office can be reached by mail at P.O. Box 219, Grande Prairie, AB T8V 3A4 or by phone at (780) 402-7602 or toll free at 1-800-455-9003. For further information about the Alberta SPCA, contact Morris Airey, Director of Enforcement, (780) 447-3600 or e-mail <direnfab@albertaspca.org>.

## Stubble Soil Moisture Map

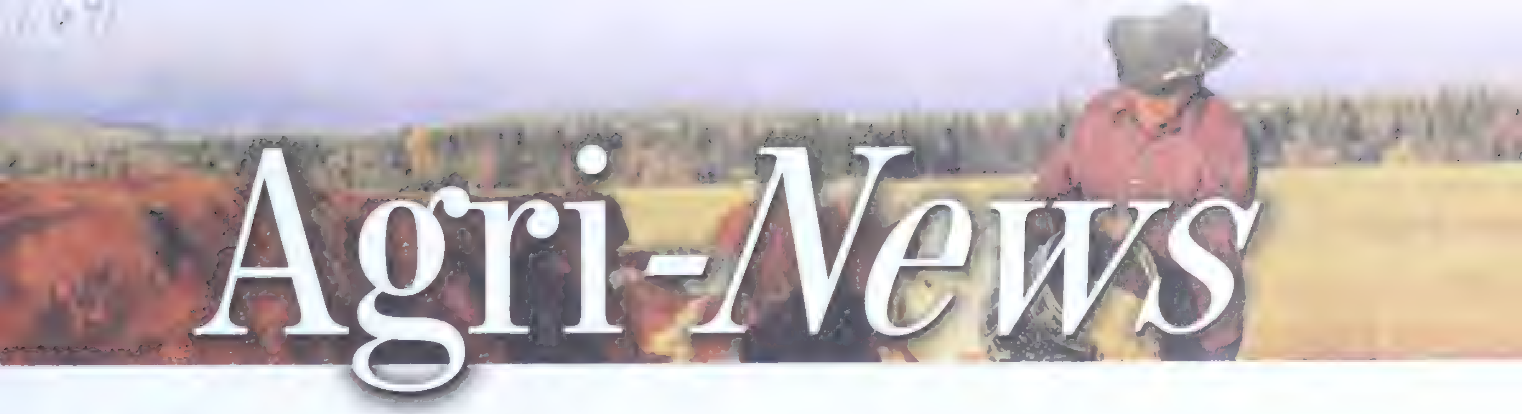
The spring edition of the Stubble Soil Moisture Map and related information are now available on the Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development web site. The information can be found at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/climate/smspring2002.html>. For further information, contact Joe Michielsen, soil moisture technologist with Alberta Agriculture (403) 381-5859, Lethbridge, or Allan Howard, soil moisture specialist with Alberta Agriculture, (780) 427-3594, Edmonton

## Crop reporting

The Crop Reporting Program for 2002 is running as a partnership between Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, the Association of Alberta Agricultural Fieldmen and Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC). This new approach began in early May with an AFSC internal survey. The responses will be used by AFSC for internal reference and reinsurance reports. As well, a summary report will be prepared and contributed by AFSC to the national bi-weekly crop reporting program run by Agriculture and Agri-food Canada and posted on the federal web site. Alberta Agriculture will be using this first report/survey data for internal reference, including input for the drought management initiative. Following this, a full survey version will be used for a published crop report from Alberta Agriculture, a further AFSC submission to the national reporting system and a drought management report from Alberta Agriculture. The full survey will include the responses from the 18 AFSC field supervisors at the municipality level as well as 42 Ag fieldmen from across the province. This model is expected to continue for the balance of the season, with a final survey in late fall. Details and dates are now being worked out between Alberta Agriculture, AFSC and Ag fieldmen. Please note that Agricore United will no longer be publishing a crop report. For further information, contact Chuanliang Su, crop statistician with Alberta Agriculture, (780) 422-2887, Edmonton.

## Salinity web page

The salinity web page on Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's web site has been receiving a lot of attention. The page gives a good description of salinity categories and the appropriate methods to control and even reclaim saline sites. Producers who have visited the site, and those who have yet to check out the information available on-line, are encouraged to continue maintaining their vigilance when it comes to salinity control and management. To view the information on the salinity web page, go to Alberta Agriculture's web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/sustain/soil/salinity/index.html>.



# Agri-News

June 24, 2002

## Elk marketing commission

The Alberta Elk Association (AEA) has been working on the future and profitability of the industry for the past several months. Market development and other profit related issues are priorities for the AEA Board.

"At the Annual General Meeting of the AEA in January 2002, AEA members and non-members approved the establishment of a commission as the market development and production support arm of the industry," says AEA president, Glenda Elkow, Elk Point. "The Alberta Agricultural Products Marketing Council, which supports and oversees commissions under the *Marketing of Agricultural Products Act*, has encouraged the AEA to pursue the commission alternative."

To ensure that all elk producers are aware of this process and have an understanding of where the process is at, a package of information was mailed out to all elk producers in Alberta and responses to this information are due back before the end of June 2002. It is anticipated that a proposal to establish an Elk Marketing Commission will be presented to the Standing Policy Committee for Agriculture on July 16, 2002.

An Elk Marketing Commission will be an important tool for renewal, growth and prosperity for the industry. The recent challenges faced by the industry demonstrate that increased involvement of producers in decision-making and accountability is needed.

The commission, a corporation under the *Marketing of Agricultural Products Act*, will ensure that producers have control over industry development and that all producers contribute. A commission is primarily concerned with stimulating the marketing of products by implementing programs and projects that support the success of producers and the industry.

A commission has the legislated authority to collect a 'service charge' from all producers. Producers have the opportunity to review an annual activity plan, including the service charge to be applied. The Elk Marketing Commission will be a refundable commission. After a year of operation, individual producers who are not satisfied with the Commission's results, can request that the refundable portion of their service charges be returned to them.

A commission cannot regulate the price of products nor place a quota on products. In the case of the Elk Marketing Commission, the powers are to raise funds through service charges and to use the funds for marketing and industry development, support and other industry related activities defined in the Plan Regulations.

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A copy of the information package can be found on the Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development web site at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/navigation/agencies/apmc/index.html> under *What's New*.

The *Marketing of Agricultural Products Act* can also be found on the Alberta Agriculture web site at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/ministry/acts/mkagpr_index.html>.

For further information, or if you as an elk producer did not receive a package, contact Len Fullen, Agricultural Products Marketing Council with Alberta Agriculture (780) 427-2164, e-mail <len.fullen@gov.ab.ca> or Debra Smith, AEA in Leduc, (780) 980-7577, e-mail <altaelk@telusplanet.net>.

*Contact:* *Len Fullen* *(780) 427-2164*
*Debra Smith* *(780) 980-7577*

## On 'course' to answer weed concern questions

Are you concerned with herbicide performance and the rising costs of controlling weeds? Has herbicide resistance become a problem on your farm? Do you have specific weed problems in shelterbelts and aquatic areas? Is the control of wild oats, green foxtail, chickweed or cleavers a concern?

"The solutions to many weed management questions, can be found by in the most recent course by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Home Study, ***Weed Management***," says Lois Hameister, educational design specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "The course was written by Dr. Mirza Baig, an internationally known expert in the field of weed management. There are 17 modules and a Planning Book."

The course contains up-to-date information on all aspects of weed control and management, including:

- weed biology and identification, and the impact of soil on weeds and herbicides
- estimating crop losses and making spraying decisions
- methods of weed control
- herbicide characteristics and herbicide formulations and selection
- herbicide classification and factors affecting herbicide performance
- herbicide application and equipment
- herbicide resistant crops
- legislation, pesticide use and personal safety
- special weed problems and control of troublesome weeds
- emerging trends in weed control.

Included with the course material is a Planning Book full of worksheets that allow individual development of an on-farm weed control plan.

The price of the course is $60 plus GST. To order the course using a credit card, call the Home Study order line at: (780) 427-2404. To order the course by mail, send a cheque to Home Study Program, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, 2nd Floor, 7000 - 113 St., Edmonton, Alberta T6H 5T6.

For more information, call the Home Study Program at (780) 427-4309, email: <home.study@agric.gov.ab.ca> or visit the web site at: <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/homestudy>.

*Contact:* *Lois Hameister*
*(780) 427-4313*

## Extension agronomists keep Alberta producers in the loop

Extension agronomists are an important link between Alberta's agricultural researchers and producers. Each member of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's new team will be working closely with agricultural researchers, applied research associations, producer groups and key farmers to get new research into the hands of Alberta's agricultural producers.

**Jay Byer** has been with Alberta Agriculture for nearly 15 years. He was a crop specialist in north eastern Alberta, and now he is an extension agronomist with crop diversification and a cereal and oilseed specialist with the Ag-Info Centre. Byer will be keeping the agriculture industry informed through conducting field schools, cooperating on projects with research organizations and ensuring rapid communication of pest threats. He is in a unique position to be able to apply information gleaned from the phone calls at the Ag-Info Centre to field situations.

**Lori Delanoy** is working out of Taber with her main area of focus being Alberta's growing potato industry. She has been working with Alberta Agriculture for two years. Prior to that Delanoy was field scouting for private industry. She has a B.Sc. in Agriculture with a major in horticulture business. She grew up in New Brunswick on a mixed farm that produced direct marketed vegetables, seed potatoes, cattle and sheep. Delanoy will be doing on-farm demos and working to increase the use of integrated pest management in the potato industry. She will be working closely with the Potato Growers of Alberta, potato producers and Alberta Agriculture researchers to ensure information flows between these groups.

**Rob Dunn** is based out of the Lethbridge Agriculture Centre. He has 20 years experience of agronomic extension experience for the agriculture industry both in the ag-chemical industry and with Alberta Agriculture. Dunn's most recent roll was that of cereal and oilseed specialist, but he also has experience with special crops, including chickpea, corn and oil seed sunflowers. This summer, he will be focusing on field days

*Cont'd on page 3*

related to crops such as mustard, chickpea, dry beans and the oil sunflower. Research activities will include cultural control strategies for the cabbage seedpod weevil, a pest that seriously threatens the canola industry in western Canada. Dunn sees himself as an important link between farmers, producer organizations, industry and research scientists in the development and delivery of relevant agronomic information.

**Mike Hall** graduated from the University of Guelph with a M.Sc. in Weed Science. In 1992, he started his career with Alberta Agriculture in Edmonton, studying the control of toadflax. He became the crop specialist in Fort Vermilion in 1995. Hall is still stationed in Fort Vermilion, but will be actively involved in applied research and extension across the Peace Region. He has strong interests in cereal and oilseed production, integrated pest management, new crop opportunities and soil improvement. Hall will be key in demonstrating new agronomic practices and new crops for Alberta's Peace Region producers.

**Murray Hartman** has almost 20 years of experience in the agriculture industry, ranging from private industry, research to extension. He has B.Sc. in Agronomy and a M.Sc. in soil fertility. Nine years ago, he joined Alberta Agriculture as a regional crop specialist in Red Deer, then became a cereal and oilseed specialist in Innisfail. Over the last two years, he has specialized in canola and has helped rewrite the canola grower's manual. Hartman's expertise is canola and cereal agronomy and soil fertility. He will be working out of Lacombe and plans to continue his focus on canola. His goals are to strengthen the agronomic information available on canola and cereal crops from government, commissions and private industry and be an effective research and extension instrument to speed the flow of new research information to industry and growers.

**Paul Laflamme** is a Peace Country native, born and raised in the Falher area. He has been with Alberta Agriculture since 1986 in the region. He has done much applied research and extension work in the areas of pulses, especially field peas and new crops. Laflamme plans to continue with some of this research and expand into areas that will add growth to Alberta's agricultural industry. He intends to work closely with agricultural researchers, applied research associations, producer groups and key farmers to get new research into the hands of the people who need it

**Ken Lopetinsky** has 30 years of experience with Alberta Agriculture and has a wide base of expertise in pulse agronomy, pulse quality and special crops agronomy. His expertise has been developed over the past 20 years in applied research, technology transfer and project management with partners including the Alberta Pulse Growers and the pulse industry. Lopetinsky used his pulse knowledge when contributing as a major author and the editor of the award winning ***Pulse Crops in Alberta*** manual. He is presently working on agronomy research, including new pea genetics, development of high quality marrowfat and specialty pea types, pea/cereal intercropping, the use of desiccants for optimum pea quality, as well as a number of pulse quality and value-added research projects partnering with other sectors of Alberta Agriculture. Lopetinsky plans to be key in information transfer between clients and industry partners. His background includes an M.Ag. from the University of Alberta in Soil Science. Besides his expertise in agriculture, his hobby is the culture, propagation and hybridization of orchids.

**Mark Olson** is a native Albertan who resides in the Stony Plain area. He has a B.Sc and M.Ag from the University of Alberta. His 16-year career started with Alberta Agriculture as a summer technician at the Crop Diversification Centre South, Brooks, working with special crops. Olson was a district agriculturist in Sangudo, a regional crop production specialist in Fairview and Airdrie, and more recently, pulse and special crops specialist in Olds and Lacombe. He also was seconded to Alberta Reduced Tillage Initiative (ARTI) for three years and has extensive expertise in direct seeding. Olson's area of specialization is pulse and special crop agronomy. Studies he has worked on recently include: special purpose field pea, micronutrients on field pea, pulse crops diversification trials (chickpea, lentil, fababean, fenugreek and dry beans) and field pea straw

**Keith Topinka** brings over 20 years of agricultural research experience to the extension agronomist team. His area of expertise is canola agronomy, including weed control and alternate seeding dates, but he has also worked with forages, special crops, and even coffee production. Topinka is the leader of the Diagnostic Field School, held each July, that gives industry participants a hands-on, one-of-a-kind learning experience in crop diagnostics. He will focus on being a conduit for relevant information between researchers, industry and producers. He is based in Edmonton and will be re-locating to the Crop Diversification Centre North, Edmonton.

**Trevor Wallace** is at Oyen. He has worked in the field of crop agronomy for 13 years in private industry and the public sector. He has a strong knowledge base in cereal and oilseed production, pest management and pulse agronomy. While in Oyen, he has worked closely with the Chinook Applied Research Association (CARA) in developing, preparing and hosting of field days and meetings. Wallace has cooperated with crop researchers in both Alberta Agriculture and Agriculture Canada to hasten the adaptation of the latest crop production technologies by producers and industry. He has worked extensively with applied research, plot development establishment and information generation and will continue to do this.

Producers who have questions on crops, weed management or research, are encouraged to contact the Alberta Ag-Info Centre at 1-866-882-7677.

*Contact* *Alberta Ag-Info Centre*
*1-866-882-7677*

## 5th annual Western Suffolk Sire Reference Program Sale

The 5th Annual Western Suffolk Sire Reference Program Sale is scheduled for Saturday, June 29, 2002 at the Olds Cow Palace, Olds, AB.

As in the past, the sale will feature Suffolk ram lambs, yearling rams and ewe lambs, and Charollais yearling rams, that have met the strict criteria to enter this elite sale: an above-average Lean Growth Index, a physical cull for teeth, legs and testicles, a flock and individual veterinary inspection and blood testing for *Brucella ovis* and Ovine Progressive Pneumonia.

"Many of the rams at this year's sale will represent new bloodlines never before available in Alberta. Members of both the Suffolk and Charollais programs have purchased and used semen from five Suffolk and two Charollais rams in the United Kingdom," says Dr. Cathy Gallivan, the geneticist for both programs. "The new British sires were chosen based on their performance in similar sire reference programs in the UK, and their offspring have performed exceptionally well in the Alberta programs this year. The June 29th sale marks the first time that any of these new bloodlines will be available to sheep producers in Alberta."

The day begins at 10:00 a.m. with the rams available for inspection by buyers, and the opening of the trade fair. The Canadian Cooperative Wool Growers will also be collecting wool at the sale, so sheep producers can sell their wool and buy a ram all in the same afternoon.

The free lamb lunch, hosted by the Western Suffolk Sire Reference Program and the Charollais Sire Reference Program will start at noon, followed by the sale at 1:00 p.m.

For further information on the sale, contact Gallivan at (403) 556-9936 or <gallivan@sheepcanada.com>. Information on both the Suffolk and Charollais programs can be found on their web pages at <www.telusplanet.net/public/gallivan/west.htm> or <www.canadiancharollaissheep.com>.

*Contact: Dr. Cathy Gallivan, PhD*
*403-556-9936*
*403-556-9937 (fax)*
*1-888-241-5124 (toll-free in Canada)*
*e-mail: gallivan@sheepcanada.com*
*Web site address: www.sheepcanada.com*

# Agri-News Briefs

## Organic farming field day

A field day has been organized by the Alberta Organic Association and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development to give interested producers a chance to visit and tour two of Alberta's organic farms. On July 18, 2002, the tour of Sunworks Farm and Little Red Hen Mills will let participants view pasture raised poultry, beef and pork, as well as several fields of organic grains and crops. Organic production, organic management practices and marketing organic products will be discussed and demonstrated by Ron Hamilton of Sunworks Farm and Steve Snider of Little Red Hen Mills. Cost is $30 per person. Pre-registration is required by July 12, 2002, with final registration between 8:00 and 9:00 a.m. in Camrose on the day of the tour. A bus will be available to take attendees to the two tour sites at 9:00 a.m. Lunch is included. For further information or to pre-register, contact Lisa, Alberta Agriculture, at (780) 679-1362 or fax (780) 679-1219, Camrose.

## Crossfield couple judged malt champs

In the world of malt, it's quality in - quality out. Once again, malting barley selected by Westcan Malt of Alix, Alberta has been judged as some of the finest on the Prairies. Of all the malting barley grown in Western Canada, only a portion is selected for malt. Of all the barley that goes malt, just a fraction can be called the very best. This year, the top malting barley in Western Canada belongs to Westcan Malting. The barley, grown by Darcey and Leisa Gallelli of Crossfield, was judged the best as part of an intensive annual competition run by the Barley Development Council. Success in growing malting barley is the result of good overall farming practices, with a dash of luck, comments barley champ Darcey Gallelli. "There's no one thing that can ensure you get malt," says Gallelli, who also grows wheat, canola and hay on his farm near Crossfield, and raises a 100-head cow herd. "It starts when you harvest the previous year's crop, and includes everything you do during the year." Gallelli credits his success to meticulous crop management in all its phases. The biggest factor is getting a good seedbed for even germination. If the crop is growing uniformly, it will ripen evenly and then you can harvest the crop in good condition.

## New venue for FarmTech

FarmTech, Alberta's premier agricultural education event has a new group of hosts for the 2003 conference. The Alberta Canola Producers Commission, the Alberta Pulse Growers, the Alberta Reduced Tillage LINKAGES program, and the Canadian Wheat Board will host the conference and agricultural showcase. Associate hosts will be the Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission and the Alberta Barley Commission. The 2003 conference will showcase the latest in technology, environmental issues, agronomics and farm management for annual crop production. The conference is scheduled for January 29, 30 and 31, 2003 and will be held in Edmonton at the Mayfield Inn. "We set a new attendance record in 2002 with over 1000 delegates attending the three-day event, a 65 per cent increase in attendance over the previous year," says Rick Taillieu, last year's conference chair. "The move to Edmonton provides FarmTech the opportunity for continued growth," adds Kenton Ziegler, the 2003 conference chair. Farmers and the industry that serves them recognize FarmTech as the best opportunity in Alberta to get the latest information and to network with leading edge crop producers from across Western Canada. For further information, contact Ziegler at (403) 947-2508

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# Agri-News

July 1, 2002

## Field scouting tips

The power of observation is a cheap, easy-to-use tool that many farmers and agronomists, alike, tend to under use.

"Field scouting uses this powerful tool called observation and is the best way to assess fields in all crop production systems" says Mark Olson, extension agronomist for the Crop Diversification Division at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre North (CDC North), Edmonton. "Field scouting at regular intervals throughout the entire growing season is an absolute must, as different factors pose a risk to the crop at different times during the growing season. Many problems if caught early on, can be corrected which potentially could save a farmer thousands of dollars. Regular field scouting is a great preventive tool and reduces the risk for unpleasant, expensive surprises come harvest."

"When problems do occur in fields, there are number of things to keep in mind when trying to diagnose a problem," adds Ken Lopetinsky, extension agronomist for the Crop Diversification Division, Alberta Agriculture, Barrhead. "A good field record keeping system is invaluable when trying to figure out why something is occurring."

This is a list of probable answers and tips to visual symptoms appearing in the field

- Always remember that nature does not exist in a straight line. Problems associated with soil fertility, insects, disease damage, as well as soil problems all occur in a circular or patchy, fashion, or on hilltops and low areas – but not in straight lines
- Straight lines are man- or machine-made. They can be due to overlap with a sprayer, a miss with a drill or fertilizer spreader or even problems from man and machine from the previous year, such as residual herbicide carryover in overlap (2x rate) areas.
- Disease normally shows up on the plant as light to dark brown to black spots, strips or lesions. On the other hand, grasshopper and hail damage will show up as a white indented lesion just after the damage and later this wound may act as a point of disease infection, thus changing color.
- Field symptoms (man or machine made) correspond to overlaps or misses of, for example, the length of the manifold on the air seeder or the center section of an 80ft sprayer unit, and can be sometimes seen on only part of the field. Measuring the distance can often help determine the cause

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## This Week

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- Always check fields early after emergence and then regularly over the growing season. Be diligent with any problems until a solution or cause is located. Contact other experts in the area to help you out.
- As this spring is windy again, always check the perimeter of the fields for spray drift from the adjoining field(s). Even with a large shelterbelt buffer, spray drift can occur due to strong winds. However, other problems such as insects, grasshoppers and Lygus bugs for instance, can migrate into the field from the fence line. Symptoms for both are actually similar in pattern – a wavy (not straight line) appearance into the field from the shelterbelt or fence line. Knowing the symptoms of herbicide and insect damage will help.
- Each herbicide group has a characteristic damage symptom in the weed plant and non-targeted crop. Know these symptoms of cupping, growing point yellowing, total plant yellowing or oranging and so on. Obtain a copy of ***How Herbicides Work (Agdex #606-2)*** to check for further symptoms.
- Problems can be caused by last year's operations. Examples include herbicide carryover problems resulting in affected areas showing fusarium wilt in field peas next year. Areas affected were patches relating to low organic matter portions of the field and where overlaps occurred in last year's herbicide application.

If you are unable to scout fields yourself due to time commitments, health, holidays, or other reasons, the agro dealership where your crop inputs were purchased will often do the scouting as a part of customer service or for a nominal fee.

Copies of ***How Herbicides Work*** are available from Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, and by calling (780) 427-0391 in the Edmonton area or toll free in Alberta at 1-800-292-5697. Cost of the publication is $35 plus GST. For mail orders or phone orders, please add $2 plus GST for shipping and handling. MasterCard and VISA are accepted.

For more information on field scouting and diagnosing crop problems, phone Alberta Agriculture Ag Info Centre at 1-866-882-7677.

*Contact: Alberta Ag Info Centre*
*1-866-882-7677*

## Province invests $4 million in beef industry development and research

The Alberta government has stepped up to the plate to provide new funding for the Canadian Cattlemen's Association's National Beef Industry Development Fund (NBIDF).

Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development made the announcement on June 18, 2002 when she presented a cheque for $4 million to Greg Conn, chairman of the Alberta Cattle Commission at the Commission's semi-annual meeting in Edmonton.

The new funding provides an opportunity for development in new marketing and promotion projects; general research on environmental issues related to beef production and processing; the transfer of information and technology to producers and consumers; projects related to biotechnology adoption; diversification; value-added initiatives and rural development that benefit the local and national beef industry.

"The livestock industry in Alberta is our largest agricultural sector. Last year it contributed 62 per cent of Alberta's farm receipts, which meant $5.1 billion to Alberta's economy. In light of threats from U.S. and European subsidies, there's never been a better time to invest in research and development in this area," said McClellan.

Conn added that an assessment of the previous NBIDF program showed that cattle producers and consumers in Canada benefited significantly from the research and market development. He applauded the provincial government's participation in this initiative, saying it is timely news for the industry.

The NBIDF is a federal/Alberta/British Columbia government partnership and agreement.

*Contact: John Knapp, Director*
*Rural Services*
*Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development*
*(780) 415-9755*

For toll-free connection outside Edmonton, dial 310-0000

## Heat canker injury in young plants

The return of hot, sunny weather to southern Alberta may lead to heat canker injury in newly emerged crops or in new transplants. Heat canker is most often seen on tender, young plants, especially on dark soils following a few days of exposure to intense sunlight. At this stage of growth, there is inadequate foliage to provide shading to the stems and, as a result, plant tissues may be damaged by high temperatures at the soil line.

"Characteristic symptoms are successive white or yellow bands that extend above the soil surface as is often seen on the leaves of young cereal plants," says Ron Howard, plant pathologist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Brooks. "Another symptom is a constriction of the stems at the soil line, or canker, that may partially or completely girdle the stem and cause the plant to topple over. This condition is sometimes seen in canola, mustard, flax, sugarbeet and newly transplanted or emerged vegetables. Soil line heat cankers can weaken plants to the extent that they may break or twist off in high winds."

In many cases, plants will grow out of the damage caused by heat canker, provided the growing point is not damaged or stem girdling is not too extensive. Once plants develop enough leaves to shade the soil beneath them, the risk of heat canker is significantly reduced.

"Heat canker symptoms can sometimes be confused with those caused by excessive winds and soil abrasion," adds Howard. "A review of recent weather conditions may be helpful in distinguishing whether seedling damage is caused by soil abrasion or heat canker. In some situations, the two types of injury can occur simultaneously in the same field."

For more information on heat canker and other crop problems, phone Alberta Agriculture Ag Info Centre at 1-866-882-7677.

*Contact*　*Ron Howard*　　*Alberta Ag Info Centre*
*(403) 362-1328*　　*1-866-882-7677*

## New resources offer cattle producers profit potential

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has compiled and released new financial information for custom grazing and backgrounding operations

Two new factsheets are available from Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office:

- ***Custom Grazing Profit$*** (Agdex FS420/821-2)
- ***Backgrounding Profit$*** (Agdex FS420/821-1)

"Discussions with custom grazing operators and backgrounders indicated a need for detailed financial information," says Dean Dyck, financial business analyst with Alberta Agriculture, Red Deer. "These factsheets were developed in response to this need. The information for each sector was generated by a group of producers who arrived at a consensus of opinion concerning the investment, production, marketing requirements, costs and revenues in a custom grazing enterprise and a backgrounding feedlot. The factsheets include production targets, financial benchmarks, critical cost factors, snapshot enterprise budgets, sensitivity analysis, risk factors and management strategies."

An interesting feature of the ***Backgrounding Profit$*** factsheet, is the benchmark figures for feeding, yardage and cost per pound of grain. These figures should help new and existing producers determine their competitiveness and profitability with others in the industry.

The ***Custom Grazing Profit$*** factsheet includes valuable information on production practices for custom grazing systems and a five year cash flow projection.

These factsheets are available from Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton. They may also be requested by calling the Publications Office at 1-800-292-5697, toll free in Alberta.

*Contact:*　*Dean Dyck, P. Ag.*
*(403) 340-7007*

## 4-H on parade

4-H members showed off their knowledge and hard work during the first weekend of June at ***4-H on Parade***. Over 800 members with nearly 1200 projects congregated at the Calgary Stampede Grounds to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

Projects on display included beef, canine, cavies (guinea pigs), cooking, crafts, horse, poultry, rabbits, sewing, sheep, and small engines. New to ***4-H on Parade*** was the canine competition in which members and their canines completed specific obstacles in the obedience and agility classes.

"I really love it!" exclaimed Jordan Dobko, a nine-year old member with the Irricana 4-H Beef and Multi Club as he entered the show ring for the sheep competition. Everyone shared his excitement as his pen of three received Grand Champion. His affliction with cerebral palsy could not keep him from doing what he likes, and he hopes to return to experience it all again next year.

Local charities and services also benefited from ***4-H on Parade***. Each year, one club raises a steer to be auctioned off with all proceeds going to the Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society (STARS). The Airdrie 4-H Beef Club sold *Chopper*, an Angus cross steer for $4.00/lb. As well, the Foothills 4-H Sheep Club sold their best lamb for $10.00/lb, and donated the money to the Alberta Children's Hospital. Congratulations and thank you to the successful bidders for both events.

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Bruce Banks, executive director for the 4-H Foundation of Alberta, summarizes the weekend as a "phenomenal success". The success of this event was in a large part due to volunteer efforts and corporate sponsorship. This year's sponsors included Agro Equipment Ltd., Calgary 4-H Regional Council, Calgary Stampede Foundation, Canadian Superior Energy Inc., and Wahl Lister. A special thank you for their continued dedication.

*Contact:* *Milo Barfuss*
*Regional 4-H Specialist*
*Alberta Agriculture,*
*Food and Rural Development, Lethbridge*
*(403) 381-5815*

# Agri-News Briefs

## Alberta historic site first to apply for Communities in Bloom award

Communities in Bloom is a national and provincial program of environmental awareness and municipal beautification. It's an initiative to involve whole communities in the challenge of improving the visual appeal of Canada's cities, towns and villages while competing for provincial and national awards. Taking the "village" part to heart, the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village is the first provincial historic site/living history museum in Canada to submit an application. Based on the upcoming August 1, 2002 evaluation, Communities in Bloom is hoping to use the site as a template to encourage other living history museums across the country to participate in the future. The Centre is pleased to participate in another opportunity that showcases its historic gardens. For further information, contact Arnold Grandt, Head of Community and Corporate Relations, Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village, c/o 8820 - 112 Street, Edmonton, AB T6G 2P8, phone (780) 662-3640 (direct at (780) 662-3855 ext. 1109) or e-mail <Arnold.Grandt@gov.ab.ca>. The web site address for the Centre is <www.cd.gov.ab.ca/uchv>.

## Exotic yarn ranks 5th in the world

Bison down yarn ranks fifth in the world when it comes to exotic yarns. In order of demand and rarity the top five down yarns are:

1. Qvieut, from Muskox
2. Cashmere
3. Camel
4. Yak
5. Bison

The price, bison down is priced at $14 per ounce, could make bison down a very profitable secondary 'crop' for bison producers, however, collecting the down is the major limiting factor. Right now, producers who gather bison down pick it up as this insulating undercoat 'blows' out of the bison coats in the spring. Producers do this by picking it off rose bushes, fences or wherever it can be found. What is really needed is an invention that would help producers catch the down. The system would need to be specifically intended for this type of down as bison down is very fine and soft and felts together very easily. In Canada, two-thirds of all patents come from farmers in the three prairie provinces. Farmers are industrious, when they need a special machine or tool, they take the initiative to improve or create what is needed. Knowing this, it won't be long before a system is developed that will help bison ranchers with their down-collecting needs.

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## Time to start scouting for leaf diseases in cereals

The amount of rainfall that has been seen in southern Alberta serves as a reminder of just how much the weather can change in a very short time. Rainfall is a blessing to parched fields, but there are many areas of the province that have yet to see any rain, with crops not likely to survive.

"It is true that every kind of weather brings its own challenges to crop production and with rainfall comes the threat of plant disease," says Jim Calpas, provincial integrated pest management (IPM) specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Cereal growers are advised to start scouting for leaf diseases now. Barley growers should be on the look-out for net blotch, septoria and scald."

Net blotch is one of the most widespread barley leaf diseases in the province. Net blotch is a fungal disease named after the distinctive *netted* leaf symptoms that it causes. It is also known that net blotch has a spot-blotch symptom that, as the name implies, is a dark brown oval spot on the leaf. Just to complicate the situation a little further, there is another fungal disease called spot-blotch that can be confused with the spot-blotch phase of net blotch

"Septoria is also fungal disease that is a concern to barley growers," adds Calpas. "Lesions usually occur first on the lower leaves and appear as water soaked spots that develop grayish centers. Septoria can also infect the glumes later in the season. Scald is another significant barley disease that is more common in the central and northern parts of the province."

Wheat growers also have to contend with septoria leaf and glume blotch. Tan spot is another disease that is more of a problem in wheat. Symptoms of tan spot begin as tiny brown flecks on the leaves that develop into lens shaped blotches.

Many of the cereal leaf diseases are able to have multiple infection cycles in the growing season that follow on the heels of periods of wet weather. The incidence of and associated losses to these diseases are typically more intense under conditions of cereal on cereal rotations.

"Crop rotation serves as a preventative control strategy," says Calpas. "Seed treatment is always a good basic preventative measure for seed-borne disease. Baytan 30 is a systemic seed treatment that suppresses scald and net blotch on barley. Agrox N – M is another seed treatment that includes net blotch control on the label."

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The fungicide Tilt is registered for control of these leaf diseases in cereals with a single application at the beginning of stem elongation to the emergence of the flag leaf generally suitable for control. Tilt has three weeks of residual activity in the plant. A second application prior to head emergence is often required for control of septoria. Remember, there is a 45 day preharvest interval on Tilt. Bravo 500 is registered for septoria leaf spot and glume blotch as well as tan spot control in wheat. Use Dithane DG Rainshield NT for tan spot and septoria leaf blotch in wheat.

Before using any chemical control, always ensure the chemical is registered for the disease of concern on the crop in question. Read and follow the label directions carefully.

*Contact: Jim Calpas*
*(780) 422-4911*

## My spruce needles are disappearing!

If the needles on your spruce tree start mysteriously disappearing in June, it may be the work of the yellowheaded spruce sawfly. The damage begins with only parts of the new tender needles being eaten away, but as the pest grows, so does its appetite. Eventually, it will eat whole needles, and once the new growth has been all eaten, the pest will move into older growth.

"Trees damaged by the yellowheaded spruce sawfly are shabby and yellowish brown looking due to the loss of needles," says Shelley Barkley, information officer at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South (CDC South), Brooks. "Needle loss is not only unsightly, but it can affect the growth of the tree for the next couple of years. By feeding on the new needles, the insect removes the most photosynthetically active tissue – the major source of nutrients for the evergreen. A severe attack for two or more consecutive years will reduce the tree's growth by 20 to 60 per cent. Defoliation also makes the tree more susceptible to harm from other factors such as adverse weather conditions. Repeated attacks over a three- to four-year period can weaken the tree so much it can die."

Seeing this insect on the tree is the toughest part of control. The yellowheaded spruce sawfly larva is caterpillar-like. It's well camouflaged by a yellow, red or green head and yellowish-green body with six olive-green stripes running its length. The body is waxy or oily looking. When the larva is disturbed, it will rear up its head and tail ends and emit a thick green fluid from its mouth that smells like spruce. Mature insects are 2.0 cm long. Feeding stops in mid-July, then the larvae drop to the ground to spin a cocoon in the soil where they spend the winter.

"It's best to start scouting for this pest about 6 to 10 days after the bud caps fall off of the new growth of spruce," adds Barkley. "The female yellowheaded sawfly prefers sunny locations to deposit her eggs. So watch the south facing sides of the tree first checking the top third to half of the tree's crown."

After spotting the insect in the tree, control is simple. Hand pick or hose the larva with water. Ambush is one control option, however, malathion will work as well. Before using any insecticide carefully read and follow label directions completely.

Remember the biggest trick to controlling yellowheaded spruce sawfly is seeing them.

Local Garden Centres can provide information for gardeners. Also, information on yard, garden, turf, shrub and tree care is included in the Alberta Agriculture publication, ***Alberta Yards and Gardens: What to Grow***. This book gives information to help Albertans successfully grow ornamental trees and shrubs, small fruits and berries, flowers, vegetables, herbs and even water plants. Cost of this publication is $15 (plus GST). Copies are available at the Alberta Agriculture Publications Office, 7000 – 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, or by calling toll free 1-800-292-5697. Please include $2 (plus GST) for shipping and handling. VISA and MasterCard are accepted.

*Contact: Alberta Agriculture Publications Office*
*1-800-292-5697*

## The road to alternative agriculture

You've been heading down the road connected to traditional agriculture and you realize that you can't or don't want to get bigger. You want to do something different. You've heard that there can be more to agriculture than commodity production. You are interested in alternative agriculture.

"To start planning a trip, you pull out a map: in agriculture business diversification, ***trends*** create the road map and point the direction," says Kerry Engel, farm direct marketing initiative, Ag Entrepreneurship Unit, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Westlock.

Some trends ag entrepreneurs should be aware of include:

- today's consumer is aging, with that comes a reduction in portion sizes and an interest in their health and wellness
- the average household size is shrinking
- the population is becoming more urbanized
- the majority of Canadians are several generations away from the farm
- they are time deprived
- they are eating out more

*Cont'd on page 3*

- the annual 2001 household spending on foodservice in Alberta was $1,836 – this is $300 more than the Canadian average

"Today's consumer is concerned about pesticide use, food safety, antibiotics, human treatment of animals and GMO's, adds Engel. "They want to know where their food comes from, how food is grown, and they want to meet the people that prepared their food. Events like the September 11 terrorist attack in New York, the Walkerton water contamination and Europe's Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak in 2001, have perpetuated consumers' concerns. These changing consumer sentiments are supporting the growth of farm direct marketed product, agri-tourism and the use of regional cuisine in Alberta and around the world."

Consumers are concerned about:

- family – they want family friendly activities in which everyone can participate
- community – they support local business
- integrity – they correlate honesty and sacrifice with a sense of integrity
- balance – they are particularly concerned about work and life balance
- authenticity – the simpler and "real" things in life
- security – they want to deal with people they know and trust.

Dual income families are interested in eating regional cuisine, eating food that is picked and prepared at its freshest, and local food products. Consumers are willing to pay more for food they believe to be fresh, nutritious and wholesome.

These trends represent opportunities for ag entrepreneurs. It could be alternative agriculture: farm direct marketing, agri-tourism or entertainment farming. More farms are beginning to open their doors to the public, connecting directly with the consumer and quietly a small change is beginning to occur across North America and around the world. Several initiatives are underway focusing on these alternative agriculture ventures.

For more farm direct marketing information, call one of the specialists in Alberta Agriculture's newly formed Agri-Entrepreneurship Unit: Engel at (780) 349-4466; or Marian Williams at (780) 679-1360. For agri-tourism information call Sharon Stollery at (780) 963-6101; or Bill Reynolds at (780) 427-4424. For toll-free access in Alberta, dial 310-0000 first.

Also, there are several new factsheets on direct marketing and agri-tourism. The Alberta Agriculture web site is also a good source to check out <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/diversify>.

*Contact: Kerry Engel*
*(780) 349-4466*
*Cell (780) 349-9017*

## 4-H Beef Heifer Show

4-H members from across the province will be participating in the 26th Annual Provincial 4-H Beef Heifer Show. From July 14 to 16, 2002, approximately 200 members will be given the opportunity to showcase their projects and learn more about the beef industry. Henry Wiegman, provincial 4-H agriculture specialist, says "Members will be extremely busy over the three days with a lot of hands-on work to make this show a huge success."

The event starts with the official opening and parade of clubs at 1:00 p.m. At this time, the public will also witness the presentation of numerous Ivomec Scholarships. The day continues with team grooming and the exhibition of various industry displays. A Project Bowl Contest, Beef Jeopardy and Team Problem Challenge wrap up the day for the participants.

"The public is invited to attend the continuation of the program with a pancake breakfast at 7:00 a.m. on Monday morning. Participants will demonstrate their knowledge throughout the morning with four judging competitions" adds Allison King, 4-H project events coordinator. "First-timers will have the chance to learn how the show runs by partaking in freshman classes. Delegates will later compete in the showmanship competition, followed by a barbeque supper." The remainder of the day will be spent on show team judging contests and an evening of entertainment.

"Participants conclude the show on July 16 with both Purebred and Crossbred conformation classes. Closing ceremonies commence at 2:00 p.m. with a special presentation of the Grand Aggregate and Friend of Beef Heifer Show Awards," says Wiegman.

Thank you to Alberta 4-H Program Trust, ABS Canada, Alberta Cattle Commission, Alberta Motor Association, ATB Financial, Bashaw Ag. Society, Gas Alberta Inc., Ivomec and UFA. Their continued support makes this program possible

| *Contact:* | *Allison King* | *Henry Wiegman* |
|---|---|---|
| | *(780) 427-4462* | *(780) 427-4532* |

# Is it in you?

"Life is full of complex questions. The theme for Club Week 2002 asks one such question, ***Is it in You?*** Leadership skills, teamwork and self-exploration are emphasized during this unique once-in-a-lifetime experience that is Club Week 2002.

This exceptional program takes place from July 23 to 28, 2002 at Olds College. Club Week, a program for senior 4-H members, focuses on personal development, allowing members to experience a variety of unique challenges. Delegates leave this program with a new outlook on life and more confidence about their abilities.

"The four-day program allows delegates to participate in many small and large group discussions and activities. Small groups focus on sessions including family, communication, human rights and values," explains Cathy Borthwick, provincial 4-H summer staff with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Airdrie. "Delegates look forward to this opportunity because Club Week allows them to take an in-depth look at issues they will come across throughout their lives."

Guest speakers that have overcome adversity will share their experiences, and show delegates that no challenge is too big to rise above. A past delegate explains these presentations as, "a chance to gain more appreciation for who I am as a person and what I am lucky to have in my life." These guest speakers give excellent examples of how far you can go if you have the right attitude.

Delegates are given the chance to interact with old friends and make new ones throughout the week. Group sessions develop new friendships and allow members to gain a deeper insight into some of the problems youth face daily. "Having a secret friend is another highlight at Club Week. Delegates have a secret friend that showers them with gifts and fun notes during camp," adds Borthwick. "At the end of the week, each person finds out who their secret friend is."

Another unique spin on the program for this year is the selection of the staff. "The summer staff has asked six eager junior staff to partake in this encounter. The junior staff can't wait to share in this experience. With their combination of personalities, they will make this camp memorable," says Heidi Bilben, provincial 4-H summer staff, with Alberta Agriculture, Airdrie. "Also, the young senior staff team will bring their memories and innovative ideas to make this camp unforgettable for all members."

Many former delegates describe this program as a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Mark Shand, provincial 4-H programs specialist emphasizes, "It makes delegates leave the camp with the vision that they can conquer any task set before them, and they will have the inner strength to assist with those daily challenges."

*Contact:* *Mark Shand*
*(403) 948-8508*

# Agri-News Briefs

## Lacombe Research Centre field day

The Lacombe Research Centre is holding a field day on August 1, 2002. Lacombe Research Centre, along with Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada and Field Crop Development Centre, Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development are hosting the day. Speakers will be on hand discussing topics such as: winter cereal production, Don Salmon, Craig Shaw (producer); ICM - integrated crop management, Neil Harker, George Clayton, Kelly Turkington; options for cereal silage production, Patricia Juskiw, Don Salmon, Solomon Kibite, Reza Khorasani; and, the use of biotechnology in variety development, Jennifer Zantinge, Kequan Xi, Joseph Nyachiro. The day starts at 8:00 a.m. with registrations being taken until 9:00 a.m., and the displays can be viewed while having a morning coffee. At 9:00 participants will make their way to the Alberta Agriculture Crop Research Station, located east of Hwy. 2A, approx. 1 mile south of Lacombe for tours and talks. In the afternoon, from 1:30 - 5:00, the tours and talks resume. Indoor presentations will be made in the event of inclement weather. Registration is $20 per person (includes lunch, tour, and refreshments). Space is limited to 150 people, so early registration is recommended. Deadline for registration is July 24, 2002, please forward fee with your registration. For more information or advance registration, contact Roberta Galenzoski and Loree Verquin at the Lacombe Research Centre (403) 782-8100, fax: (403) 782-6120 or e-mail: <galenzoskir@em.agr.ca> or <verquinl@em.agr.ca>. Additional information and a registration form are available on the Alberta Agriculture web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/ministry/pid/fcdc/index.html>.

## AVAC Investment helps test market a new product

An Alberta restaurant owner will test market a new curry pastry product with the help and support of AVAC Ltd, a corporation established to help add value to agricultural products. A $24,000 investment under the Idea Builder program will make it possible for Malay King, a Calgary manufacturer of Asian curry sauces and pastes to test market this new product in the province. Malay King's new product line is a baked curry pastry product that will be found in the freezer sections of local grocery and convenience stores and sold in family packs and individual sizes. The product will target consumers who are looking for a healthy, tasty, convenient snack or meal. Alberta-sourced ingredients such as canola oil, flour, chicken, beef, and vegetables will be used to make the product. "Malay King is working hard to develop products for the growing ethnic food market in Canada," said Corey Keith, senior investment manager for AVAC Ltd. Fred Wai, creator of Malay King sauces, will work with food specialists at the Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Food Processing Development Centre at Leduc to fine-tune this recipe, create sample products and conduct taste testing. The new line of Malay King products is expected to be on store shelves in January 2003. Some preliminary market research has been performed at Wai's restaurant, Malay Wok in Calgary. AVAC's Idea Builder program provides streamlined access to seed capital for early stage, smaller projects that add value to agricultural commodities. Projects may include ideas such as new food and health products, marketing innovations and breakthroughs in food processing technologies. AVAC invests in innovative ideas that add value to agricultural commodities through coaching, knowledge, contacts and financial resources. AVAC's mission is to help accelerate the growth of agrivalue in Alberta. Created in 1997, AVAC has to date committed over $16 million to agrivalue initiatives. For further information, contact Corey Keith at (403) 274-2774, e-mail <ckeith@avacltd.com> or Fred Wai, (403) 630-5271, e-mail <malayking@shaw.ca>.

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# Agri-News

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## Ag information at your fingertips

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has hundreds of factsheets and publications available at the Agriculture Publications Office in Edmonton. Information included in these publications covers a wide range of topics; crops, horticulture, soils and water, livestock, aquatic life, insect and disease pests, agricultural engineering and agricultural economics.

Both free and priced publications are constantly being updated and revised. As well, many new publications and factsheets are continually being added to the list of publications as research and information is compiled.

For example, four new free factsheets have recently been produced and are now available. These include

- ***Small Earth Fill Dams*** (Agdex 716-A20) – describes this cost-effective method of storing larger volumes of water for livestock or irrigation. Information includes planning, site selection, dam design, dam capacity, spillway design, construction and maintenance.
- ***Spring Development*** (Agdex 716-A15) – gives information on proper spring development to ensure the spring doesn't become contaminated or the access become a mud hole from over use and improper area traffic. The factsheet includes information on planning, monitoring and developing hillside and low area springs. It also gives examples of design options for winter watering of livestock from springs
- ***Feeding Young Horses for Sound Growth*** (Agdex 460/50-2) – proper foal nutrition is very important for strong, sound development. This factsheet gives information on nutrient requirements, the young horse's digestive system, recommended forages and grains, and protein quality and quantity in the young horse's diet. Information is included for nursing foals, weanlings, yearlings and two-year olds.
- ***Feeding and Managing Horses During Drought*** (Agdex 460/50-4) – poor growing conditions are often reflected in the quality and quantity of pasture feed. The effects of drought are certainly factors that need to be considered in feeding and management decisions. This factsheet provides information on pasture management considerations, alternative feed sources and other management considerations.

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## This Week

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**Internet site: www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agrinews Editor e-mail: agrinews@gov.ab.ca**

Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

A list of Alberta Agriculture's publications and factsheets is available from the Alberta Agriculture Publications Office, 7000 – 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, or by calling toll free 1-800-292-5697.

Many of the free factsheets are also available on-line on Alberta Agriculture's web site <www.agric.gov.ab.ca>.

Priced publications are also included in the publications list. GST must be added to the price of each of these publications.

All publications and factsheets can be ordered by phone by dialing 1-800-292-5697. For priced publication mail orders, please add $2 (plus GST) for shipping and handling. VISA and MasterCard are accepted.

*Contact: Alberta Agriculture Publications Office*
*1-800-292-5697*

## Don't plow that sod... take a break with no-till

Removing perennial forages in a crop rotation has never been easy. Beyond the costly sod-breaking and the sacrifice of seasonal production, the potential for soil erosion and moisture loss is very high.

"There are real costs to breaking up an old, worn-out hayfield or pasture," says Ron Heller, reduced tillage agronomist with RT LINKAGES, Vermilion. "Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has a Farm Machinery Cost Calculator on their web site <http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/app07/machcostcalceb>. A cost analysis done up on this calculator may serve as a guideline or tool to provide some relative numbers."

For tillage operations, with a 180hp two-wheel drive tractor, farmers might use:

1. a 4-bottom plow @ 4 acres per hour (ac/hr) for a cost of almost $22.00 per acre (ac) on a quarter section
2. a 24 ft. tandem disc @ 10 ac/hr which calculates to $8.70/ac
3. tillage with a 31 ft. HD cultivator @ 13 ac/hr, equaling $5.87/ac

"Using these three examples, we can calculate how much work is required to get the field ready for re-seeding," adds Heller. "The calculations will vary for each location. A combination of passes, with various tillage implements similar to the ones listed here, is normally used to break sod. With tillage, remember that additional operations such as harrowing, rock picking and re-seeding will apply. Direct seeding can simplify and reduce this workload.

"Given the technology now available for direct seeding into sod, traditional tillage-break methods no longer seem necessary. The cost calculator shows a dollar per acre savings in equipment when tillage is reduced. For example, in a no-till scenario, a 100hp tractor and 80 ft. pull-type sprayer @ 41 a/hr costs $2.51/ac. With a 10 ft. no-till drill @ 3.7 a/hr, direct seeding into the killed sod is $21.35/ac. Of course a cash outlay for herbicide is also required – Monsanto's Roundup Transorb™ @ $9.00/Litre is a good choice. Most conditions need the full 2 L/ac recommended rate."

Herbicide-removal for direct seeding begins pre-harvest in August, and the next crop can be in the ground by early May the following year. In contrast, forage removal with tillage must often start in the spring of the year, or even the previous fall, to work the sod when it's not as active. Generally, numerous field passes will eventually break down the sod and smooth out the field again for seeding. This process demands a lot of time, fuel, maintenance and cooperative weather to ensure adequate weed control and seedbed preparation – frequently delaying seeding time and compounding the effort and risk.

"Summarizing these calculated costs, to take out 160 acres of unwanted forage crop, there appears to be a range of expense from just under $1000 to over $3500 for initial tillage," says Heller. "The suggested rate of herbicide is about $2800, and direct seeding another $3400. Assessing the cost of ownership and machinery operation requires a sharp pencil. I think in some cases the investment in machinery, fuel and repairs for tillage may exceed the price of herbicide required for reduced tillage methods. However, to compare the two systems, just how much tillage is needed to get the job done is something that needs to be assessed. These calculations will differ from farm to farm.

"The numbers of growers with direct seeding equipment and experience continue to increase. No-till drills can be rented and custom operators found. Perhaps it's time to try a small field, then consider the results and see for yourself that reducing tillage saves moisture, soil, time and money."

For more information on forage removal, sod seeding, or direct seeding and reduced tillage, search RT LINKAGES web site <http://reducedtillage.ca/>.

*Contact: Ron Heller*
*(780) 853-8262*

## Winter cereals – an opportunity worth looking at

Spring this year in Alberta was more stressful than usual. Because of the province's relatively short growing season, getting the seeding job done at the right time can be a challenge, and this year could be a good time to consider winter cereals.

"Having a second seeding opportunity in the second half of August and September can be a great advantage," says Nick Underwood, P.Ag., reduced tillage agronomist with RT

*Cont'd on page 3*

LINKAGES in the Peace Region. "Varieties of winter wheat are improving and there is a dollar margin to be had. Also, fall seeded triticale can produce large volumes of silage, for producers with a use for it, or respectable grain yields. It may be harder to gain a good margin from fall rye, although there can be contracts for the grain with distillers."

***Possible costs and revenue from winter wheat per acre***

**Expenses**

| | |
|---|---|
| Seed | $15.00 |
| Fertilizer | $35.00 |
| Herbicide | $10.00 |
| Fuel, Lube & Repair | $18.00 |
| Crop Ins | $ 4.00 |
| **TOTAL** | **$ 82.00** |

*(subtract expenses total from expected revenue)*

| *Yield: bu/ac* | *Fd. Wht. Price* | **Revenue** | **Per acre contribution margin** |
|---|---|---|---|
| 40 | $3.25 | $130.00 | $ 48.00 |
| 55 | $3.25 | $178.75 | $ 96.75 |
| 70 | $3.25 | $227.50 | $145.50 |
| 85 | $3.25 | $276.25 | $194.25 |

"This table gives a rough idea of potential margins over variable costs if winter wheat is sold at a feed wheat price of $3.25/bushel," explains Underwood.

Winter wheat can often yield 10 to 15 per cent higher than Canada Western Red Spring wheat. Trials in Saskatchewan over 10 years (1982-1991) showed that the Black and Grey soil zones gave winter wheat yields twice as high as the Brown soil zone.

"There are other advantages to growing winter cereals that may not be clear when initially doing the financial planning," says Underwood. "Continuous growing of spring seeded crops can contribute to a problem with wild oat population. But, if a field already has a well-established crop growing in the spring, wild oats will not be able to compete well. In this case, it might not be necessary to use a wild oat herbicide. This can certainly be the case when growing fall triticale for silage. There are reports of a 12 tonne yield of triticale silage, taken in two cuts, in 2001."

It's important to control over-wintering annual weeds, and this can be done at a fairly low cost in the fall or spring. Fall seeded cereal crops are themselves over-wintering annuals and winter seeding gives the cereal an advantage over weeds germinating in spring.

"Farmers in southern Alberta are familiar with the winter wheat opportunity," adds Underwood. "Hopefully, Peace Region farmers and central Alberta farmers can be encouraged to give winter cereals another look. Maybe this is the year to give it a try."

Producers are encouraged to check out the information available through the Reduced Tillage Linkages web site at <www.reducedtillage.ca> (look for winter cereals under the *Knowledge Tidbits*). Information is also available on the Alberta Agriculture web site located at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca>.

For producers considering trying some acres of winter-seeded cereals this August or early September, here are some tips:

- line up seed as soon as possible!
- select land that has (or will have) standing stubble to seed into
- make sure that all green growth has been sprayed out with Roundup prior to seeding
- seed with a narrow opener – **no deeper than 1 inch**
- soil test and place adequate phosphate fertilizer with the seed. Make sure that copper is not going to limit the yield
- be prepared to control over wintering annual weeds late in the fall or as soon as you can get on the land in the spring
- nitrogen, broadcast as ammonium nitrate, applied early in spring has produced the most consistent results – use generously for high yields.

*Contact:* *Nick Underwood*
*(780) 539-4498*

## *Take the bite out of spider mites*

As the hot dry days of summer continue, plants can be susceptible to the heat-loving spider mite pest. Spider mites attack a wide range of plants. It takes a sharp eye to see them, but once familiar with the plant damage they do, the signs are easily spotted.

"Mites are the size of the sharp end of a pin, and are difficult to see without using a magnifying glass," says Shelley Barkley, information officer at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South, Brooks. "The most tell-tale sign that mites are feeding on plants is the damage they leave behind. Mites are sucking insects, removing cell contents as they feed. They leave a speckling or stippling of the needle or leaf. The damage shows up first on the base of the needles of conifers, and generally between the veins of the leaves on deciduous plants. As feeding continues, the leaves or needles will gradually turn brown and dry. If it is the webbing that draws your attention, then there is a large population of the pest present. The plants also take on a dirty appearance as the webbing traps dirt and poplar fuzz."

*Cont'd on page 4*

Mite feeding reduces plant vigor. This limits the amount of fruit strawberry plants and raspberry and currant bushes produce. Spruce can have branch die-back, but more importantly, spider mites add to stress that will increase the amount of winter damage the following season.

"Monitoring for spider mites is important," adds Barkley. "The easiest way to identify this pest on conifers is to shake any suspect infested branches over a white piece of paper and watch for movement across the page. Check deciduous plants by turning the leaf over in your hand so the top surface of the leaf is in your palm. The heat from your hand will cause a scurrying of the pests across the leaf underside."

If monitoring shows that spider mites are present and if water is not a limiting factor, wash the plants down with a strong spray of water. Use a garden hose, not a pressure washer. Hosing the plants down on a weekly basis with water will help deter the mites.

There are insecticides, including insecticidal soap, that are registered for control of mites. Be sure to check the label for recommended rates and if the product is registered for use on the plant being treated. Special care should be taken when applying insecticides to food-bearing plants. Be sure the product is registered for that plant and carefully note how many days after treatment before produce can be eaten.

Local Garden Centres can provide additional information for gardeners.

***Backyard Pest Management in Alberta*** is an Alberta Agriculture publication that gives a practical look at over 150 pests that commonly damage trees, shrubs, lawns, flowers and gardens. The information included in the book will help homeowners identify whether problems with plants and trees are caused by insects or disease. Cost of this 83-page pest guide is $5 (plus GST).

Also, information on yard, garden, turf, shrub and tree care is included in the Alberta Agriculture publication, ***Alberta Yards and Gardens: What to Grow***. This book gives information to help Albertans successfully grow ornamental trees and shrubs, small fruits and berries, flowers, vegetables, herbs and even water plants. Cost of this publication is $15 (plus GST).

Copies of both of these publications are available at the Alberta Agriculture Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, or by calling toll free 1-800-292-5697. Please include $2 (plus GST) for shipping and handling. VISA and MasterCard are accepted.

*Contact: Alberta Ag-Info Centre*
*1-866-882-7677*

## 4-H T.E.A.M.S

The 4-H summer programs sports theme continues throughout the summer with numerous regional and provincial camps. Campers who partake in these camps will experience many new and exciting activities. One of the highlighted programs is People Developing People (PDP). This camp, occurring three times this summer, hosts nearly 200 delegates who will participate in team building skills and exciting sessions.

"T.E.A.M.S. is the main theme behind the PDP camps. T.E.A.M.S. stands for Together Everyone Achieves Much Success. Cooperation is promoted, as it's important for delegates to realize the power of working in a group," says Eran Hawkwood, provincial 4-H summer staff with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Airdrie. "PDP Plus is one of the new camp programs this year. Delegates will have a chance to tackle important social topics that they currently deal with at this stage in their life and then present their ideas on how to deal with these issues to the group. This year's issues center around youth and alcohol."

"Campers will leave these camps with improved leadership skills as they increase their knowledge about subjects such as peer pressure and nationalism," adds Mark Shand, provincial 4-H programs specialist. "Environmental awareness is also a highlight of PDP, and participants will discover new appreciation for their surroundings." Delegates will gain further insight from many guest speakers and will face a variety of scenarios that they will have to solve.

PDP still keeps all of the camp traditions. Delegates will partake in large group games, group challenges and even have the chance to participate in the overnight camp-out. "The program is jammed packed for delegates to have fun," says Lanny Anderson, provincial 4-H summer staff. "When I went to PDP, I learned a lot of interesting information while meeting new friends. The experience was unforgettable. Now I want to create these memories with this year's delegates."

*Contact: Mark Shand*
*(403) 948-8508*

# Agri-News Briefs

## Agriculture facts

- Alberta is the second largest agricultural producer in Canada. With only 10 per cent of the nation's population, Alberta contributes just under 23 per cent of the farm cash receipts generated from primary agriculture.
- The Alberta food industry contributed 4.2 per cent of the province's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2000, with 2.6 per cent coming from primary agriculture and 1.6 per cent from food and beverage manufacturing
- Alberta exported a record $6 billion of primary and processed agri-food products in 2001 to over 100 countries around the world. This was 14.4 per cent higher than in 2000. just over 54 per cent, or $3.3 billion of all exports went to the United States. Japan was the next largest export market at $793 million
- The top five agri-food exports from Alberta in 2001 were beef and veal at $1.7 billion, wheat at $1.2 billion, live cattle at $712 million, canola at $448 million and port at $217 million

## Pre-cooling technology information available

Pre-cooling immediately after harvest is the key component in preserving the quality of perishable fresh produce. The practice of pre-cooling has existed for years, and several methods and techniques have been developed. As interest in pre-cooling fresh fruits and vegetables has grown in Alberta, the need for information on various cooling technologies was also needed. A new 33-page publication, ***Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Pre-Cooling for Market Gardeners in Alberta*** (Agdex #736-14) provides that information. The publication includes information and results from a number of years of Alberta-based research sponsored by the Albert Market Gardeners Association (AMGA) and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Details and drawings of the construction and use of a pre-cooling system during harvest are included in the publication. Copies of this free publication are available from Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office at 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, by calling toll free 1-800-292-5697, or by visiting the Alberta Agriculture web site at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca>.

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July 22, 2002

## Pasture drought conditions severe in parts of Alberta

The lack of precipitation has drastically reduced grass and water supply conditions on pastures across central and eastern Alberta. The lack of feed and water is creating huge challenges for many producers. Because of this, many producers are looking at grazing some of their poorer cereal crops, however, most of these have no fences or water supplies.

"Water supplies are also in bad shape; the worst most producers in the area have ever seen," says Bob Buchanan, agricultural water specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Most natural water sources for livestock, including sloughs and creeks, have been dry since spring. Even some of the lakes in eastern parts are dry with clouds of salt being blown by the wind across neighboring farmland. Most shallow dugouts that are 10 feet deep or less are also dry. There are no easy answers to these severe drought conditions until some heavy rains come to this area."

From a water supply perspective some of the options producers are using include:

- well and pipeline systems
- small dugouts and pumping systems to access shallow groundwater
- deep dugouts – 15 to 30 feet in depth
- remote watering systems
- spring developments
- small earth fill dams with the reservoir excavated to provide a deeper more drought proof source
- emergency water pumping to fill dugouts
- water hauling

Two new Agri-Facts factsheets are now available from Alberta Agriculture, ***Spring Development*** (Agdex #716-A15) and ***Small Earth Fill Dams*** (Agdex #716-A20). Producers will find the information included in these free factsheets helpful if they are planning or considering these types of water projects.

"The information factsheet on springs explains how to assess the flow rate of a spring to determine if it's worthwhile to develop," adds Buchanan. "It also shows ways of developing springs to improve the supply while protecting the spring from contamination by livestock. The factsheet on small dams provides everything from planning, to licensing, to dam and spillway construction and maintenance."

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## This Week

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**Internet site: www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agrinews Editor e-mail: agrinews@gov.ab.ca**

These factsheets and a number of articles, agri-facts, manuals and videos on all types of farm water projects are available by calling Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office toll free at 1-800-292-5697 or by visiting the Alberta Agriculture web site <www.agric.gov.ab.ca>.

For more information on farm water supplies and drought proofing your farm, call the Alberta Ag-Info Centre (1-866-882-7677) to contact an agricultural water specialist for your area. They can provide technical assistance and advise you on what financial assistance is available for farm water supplies under the Alberta Farm Water Program.

*Contact:* *Bob Buchanan*
*(780) 422-5000*

## Livestock care conference

More than 150 people attended the Livestock Care Conference held on June 25, 2002 in Edmonton. The conference was sponsored by the producer group Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC) and the University of Alberta.

Attendees at the conference included people involved in livestock, academic, research and food retail businesses and industries. Interest in animal welfare and safe and humane handling of farm animals stems largely from perceived demands by consumers resulting from pressure by various animal rights groups in the United States. Conference speakers from both Canada and the U.S. discussed how major food companies are demanding assurance that livestock has been treated humanly at all stages of production and marketing.

"Animal welfare, along with food quality, safety and health, is an essential part of any quality assurance program," says Susan Church, AFAC manager. "The livestock industry is now being asked to prove that animals are treated humanely. These demands come as a direct result of consumers asking for these assurances."

One of the main things in any set of standards for operation is that the process is clear and simple, and can be implemented and audited. Alberta producer groups have recognized this trend and have worked for years on developing standards that ensure the safe and healthy handling of animals in the province, from the farm, through transport and in the processing facilities.

"Alberta has always realized that for standards to be effective and sustainable, they must be based on sound science and good animal production practices," says Dr. John Church, livestock welfare specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Red Deer. "Farm animal management strategies must be backed by science to work. To be in the farm animals' best interest, management standards must be backed by credible information."

Alberta's major livestock groups formed AFAC in 1993 to promote responsible animal care. Alberta producers showed that they were well ahead of the animal care trend. The livestock industries have worked to ensure that farm animal care in the province is based on sound practices and have proven to be leaders in setting animal care standards.

AFAC supports research projects and pursues education initiatives that target industry and the general public. The annual Livestock Care Conference is an ongoing part of AFAC's education effort.

| *Contact:* | *Dr. John Church* | *Susan Church* |
|---|---|---|
| | *(403) 340-5335* | *(403) 932-8050* |

## Sign, sign – everywhere a sign

Effective signs are a must. Signs trigger the customers' first impressions of a business. They tell customers what a business is about, what it sells, where it sells and what quality they can expect when they buy. Signs can be a semi-permanent or moveable advertisement for an agri-business. Effective signs repeat an advertising message over and over as people pass, reinforcing brand recognition or enticing them to stop and buy.

"Use signs to promote your business," says Linda Hawk, ag-entrepreneurship action team, with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Medicine Hat. "Promotional signs give customers information about your product, prices or special events. Signs are an extension of your marketing plan, so make them effective. Use consistent graphics, lettering, slogans and other 'branding' to help customers identify the sign with your business and product. Your sign may be the key to a customer recognizing you across a crowded marketplace or on a busy roadside."

Signs in motion are also effective. Turn the company van or pickup into a rolling billboard. With a vehicle sign, you can promote a product 24 hours a day. Be sure to make moving signs readable and concise, because customers may only have a second to get the message. However, with these mobile signs, prospective customers will see them over and over again.

"There are two important things to remember when developing the signing for a business," adds Hawk. "Make signs consistent with the brand identity, and avoid the urge to do it yourself to save money. Sacrificing a product's image in your customers' eyes is not the message the business wants to send. Consistency and quality are the two things that must be clearly shown in signing as well as in other business practices."

Directional signs help your customers find the business, especially if business is being done from the farm. Vague directions won't be very helpful for most customers, particularly if passers-by are being targeted. Be specific and give the complete address for the business.

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Use directional tent signs to make your presence known at the local farmers' market or fair and increase your foot traffic exposure.

Also, directional signs can provide instructions to customers once they are at the place of business. Parking signs, signs telling newcomers how to get around the farm and which areas are restricted are very helpful signs to have up.

"Businesses must also be aware of provincial and municipal laws indicating the size and placement of signs," says Hawk. "These laws are in place to help keep roads and highways free of distractions and clutter that may affect visibility. So, before spending a lot of money on a billboard-sized sign, check with the municipality for any restrictions that might apply." Effective signs can be an important consideration for promoting and marketing a business.

The July issue of the ***Alberta Agri-Preneur*** offers a number of contacts and resources to help design effective signs while keeping within the guidelines. If you don't yet receive this quarterly newsletter, but would like to be added to the mailing list, contact Darleen at (780) 349-4466, toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first.

*Contact: Linda Hawk*
*(403) 528-5250*

## Alberta beef genomics research receives over $6 million

What's the best way to turn low value feed into a high value steak? That is the very question Dr. Stephen Moore, Beef Genomics researcher at the University of Alberta, is trying to answer.

A $1.2 million grant from the Alberta Agricultural Research Institute (AARI) has brought support for the University of Alberta beef genomics program to over $6 million, which puts the program on par with others around the world. Other support has come from the Alberta Cattle Commission, Canadian Cattlemen's Association, the Canada-Alberta Beef Industry Development Fund, provincial and federal governments and an additional $2.5 million in international support

"The support that we have received so far from the province and from Alberta Science and Research Authority (ASRA) has enabled this project to go ahead," says Moore. "Industry support is critical since our work will feed directly back to them."

The beef genomics studies undertaken by Moore and his international collaborators will help producers grow more efficient animals, creating less manure, methane and other wastes. Once researchers are able to identify the genes that dictate how an animal uses its feed to create fat and muscle, they are able to select the superior animals for breeding

"Our research is important to cattle producers because it becomes possible to know at the time of breeding what traits the offspring will have in terms of production efficiency, meat quality and consumer preference," says Moore. "It's useful information, considering that right now there can be a 20-year lag between breeding decisions being made and the finished meat reaching the store shelf.

We will harness the existing variation in cattle populations as opposed to transferring genes from other species. The economics of using genetic engineering for production traits in cattle such as growth or meat quality just don't add up at the moment."

Better knowledge of genes and resultant characteristics, however does add up to better business for cattle producers, processors and marketers. It also allows for breeding strategies that minimize production costs yet maximize the food value and consumer appeal of the beef produced.

The province-wide initiative led by Moore includes researchers at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the University of Calgary. As well, international collaborators in the USA, Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand and Brazil are working together on the genomics of beef cattle.

*Contact: Dr. Stephen Moore*
*(780) 492-0169*

*Cynthia Strawson*
*Communications Officer*
*Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry, and Home Economics*
*University of Alberta*
*(780) 492-8127*

## Troubleshooting water well problems

"With the continuing drought conditions across many parts of Alberta, many producers are experiencing lower water well yields and in some situations wells are going dry. In areas that rely heavily on shallow bored wells less than 50 feet in depth, it is especially bad," says Bob Buchanan, agricultural water specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Even some of the deeper wells that are over 100 feet in depth are experiencing problems, however, many of these well problems are influenced by other factors."

There are a number of causes for water well yields to decline over a period of years. They include:

- pumping rates exceeding the rate of groundwater recharge for the area
- periods of drought temporarily depleting shallow groundwater

- bacterial slime plugging the slotted and perforated casing and pump intake and well screens
- mineral scale (incrustation) building up on the perforated well casing, well or pump screen
- sediment plugging on the outside of perforated casing or screen
- the well casing or borehole collapsing due to corrosion of the metal casing

It's important to determine if the supply is depleting or whether something is restricting the flow of water into the well. Producers can measure the static (non-pumping) water level in the well. This is best done early in the morning prior to any water being used from the well. To measure the static water level, a water well sounder or other such device is needed. Producers can usually borrow or rent these from a local well driller.

"A comparison of the static water level now and when it was first drilled can then be made," adds Buchanan. "If the groundwater aquifer is depleting, the static water level will be much lower than its original level. If the water level is similar to when it was first drilled, the aquifer is not the problem. Producers can then surmise that the problem is either bacteria slime, minerals or sediment build up that is plugging the well and/or pump screen and restricting water flow into the well. This can dramatically reduce well yields and steps should be made to correct these problems."

In some situations simply performing a thorough shock chlorination treatment on the well will kill the iron and/or sulfate, reducing bacteria that are causing the plugging problem and restore well yield. For wells with very hard and rusty water, mineral incrustation can be the problem.

"For wells located in aquifers with very fine, silty sand, sediment plugging is often the problem," says Buchanan. "For mineral and sediment plugging problems, its best to hire a water well driller to assist in restoring production. A new well may be required for well problems that are difficult to correct."

A manual called ***Water Wells that Last*** contains an abundance of information and is available free of charge by calling (780) 422-5000, toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first.

For more information on water wells, call the Alberta Ag-Info Centre at 1-866-882-7677 to contact an agricultural water specialist for your area. They can provide you with technical assistance and advise you on what financial assistance may be available under the Alberta Farm Water Program.

Groundwater information is also available by calling the Groundwater Information Centre at (780) 427-2770, toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-000 first, or by going online to the Alberta Environment web site at <http://www3.gov.ab.ca/env/water/groundwater/index.html>.

*Contact: Bob Buchanan*
*(780) 422-5000*

# Agri-News Briefs

## Safe livestock handling course

According to the Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC), the major causes of livestock handling injuries are fearful animals, faulty equipment, male dominance aggression, and maternal aggression. Livestock producers are invited to register for a Safe Livestock Handling course, being organized as demand dictates by Jennifer Woods. The workshop covers safe and humane handling of livestock, including poultry, cattle, horses, pigs, sheep, goats, bison, elk, llama and ostrich. Developed and presented by Woods, the workshop includes information on flight zones, disease and human health hazards; facility design and workplace safety; recognizing and handling sick, injured or distressed animals; livestock first-aide; capture, calm and restrain; livestock and the law; euthanasia; disposal of dead stock; and, child safety. Woods is willing to present this workshop to any group of 10 participants or more. Local agricultural associations and producer groups are encouraged to poll their members and contact Woods with a convenient time and location for their group to take advantage of the workshop. Cost of the course is $80 per person, and reduced group rates when over 20 participants are registered are available. For further information, contact Jennifer Woods at (403) 684-3008 or e-mail <ReflectedJ@aol.com>.

## Black currant producers field tour

For the second year, a tour of black currant growers' operations has been organized by Alberta's black currant producers, in association with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South. Lloyd Hausher, business development officer, fruit crops, with Alberta Agriculture, Brooks, has been working with black currant producers to organize a network to increase information flow, networking and joint ventures. The field tour is being held in the Lethbridge area on July 30, 2002. The tour starts at 10:30 at the black currant operation owned by Steven and Brian Vandervalk, nine kilometers north of Fort Macleod, followed by lunch in Lethbridge. During the afternoon, two more operations will be visited, the first owned by Jake Neufeld and the second owned by Paul and Hilda deJonge. Both afternoon locations are east of Lethbridge. These locations were chosen to demonstrate differences in production practices. Growers and people considering black currant growing are invited to attend. There is no registration fee. For further information on locations, directions and times, contact Hausher at (403) 362-1309, toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first.

## Hort Week

The 38th Annual Hort Week event is being held at the Olds College on July 21 to 26, 2002. Special events at the college include the grand opening and ribbon cutting of the Botanic Garden on July 25, 2002 at 4:00 p.m. The college is also offering short courses in home and garden; arts and crafts; home décor floral design; commercial horticulture; and, commercial floral design schools. The public is welcomed to visit the college and participate in and enjoy several of the events planned for this weeklong celebration of horticulture. For further information, contact Olds College Extension Services at (403) 507-7956 or toll free at 1-800-661-6537, ext. 7956. To register for courses, call (403) 556-4684, or toll free 1-800-661-6537, ext. 4684. The Olds College web site can be visited at <www.oldscollege.ab.ca>

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# Agri-News

July 29, 2002

## Alberta responds to agriculture disaster with $324 million Farm Income Assistance Program

The Alberta government has come to the aid of its agricultural producers with a $324 million Farm Income Assistance Program (FIAP) solely funded by the province as announced on July 17, 2002.

Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, said FIAP 2002 is new funding approved by Treasury Board that responds to disastrous agricultural conditions. In addition to this $324-million program, the provincial government is still committed to a matching 40 per cent contribution to the recently announced federal bridge funding as governments work towards long-term solutions under the Agricultural Policy Framework (APF). How bridge funding will flow to producers is still to be determined

"We face losses of up to a third of our province's cow population. Nearly three-quarters of our agriculture land is the driest it has been in 133 years. The remainder of the land is still in a state of recovery from previous dry seasons," said McClellan. "We simply won't let our producers down."

The 2002 FIAP program includes:

- $7.15 per acre for cultivated annual crop land;
- $10 per acre for tame forage (cultivated hay and pasture);
- $4 per acre for fenced native forage (land not cultivated);
- $4.50 per bee hive;
- 20 cents per square foot for covered crops (greenhouses, mushroom production); and,
- $100 per acre for perennial horticulture crops.

Before designing FIAP 2002, the province consulted with the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties (AAMD&C) as well as individual reeves and municipal councils in drought-affected areas

Jack Hayden, AAMD&C president, said his association urged government to provide fast, widespread support to producers. "The announcement today corresponds with the issues we've heard in our municipalities and responds rapidly to their concerns."

McClellan said she and her colleagues heard from hundreds of producers about the economic hardship they face. FIAP 2002 will quickly move funds into the hands of those producers who,

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in some cases, have been selling off their future by depleting stock and assuming debt. As well, the province's crop insurance program has increased its program flexibility this year to accommodate increased pressure on the livestock industry.

"While Alberta undoubtedly has the most comprehensive safety net program in all of Canada, it was apparent we needed to further support our industry through an incredibly difficult year," said McClellan.

In addition, the agriculture minister continued to urge her federal colleagues to quickly declare the entire province a drought zone, allowing producers to defer income tax on the sale of breeding livestock.

Application forms for FIAP 2002 will be mailed directly to producers who participated in last year's program. Those who did not claim in 2001 can obtain forms at Alberta Agriculture hub offices; AFSC offices; on the department's web site at <www.agric.ab.ca>; or, through rural MLA constituency offices.

More information is available by contacting the Rural Services Division of Alberta Agriculture at (780) 422-9167 (toll-free by calling 310-0000). Information is also available from Alberta Connects at 310-4455.

Deadline for receiving applications is November 30, 2002.

*Contact:* *John Knapp*
*Director, Rural Services Division*
*Alberta Agriculture*
*(780) 415-9755*

*Lloyd Andruchow*
*Head, Program Policy and Evaluation*
*Alberta Agriculture*
*(780) 427-3338*

*For toll-free connection outside Edmonton, dial 310-0000*

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# Farm Income Assistance Program 2002

There are six components of the Farm Income Assistance Program 2002 (FIAP 2002) that Alberta producers can apply for:

- $7.15 per acre for cultivated annual crop land;
- $10 per acre for tame forage (cultivated hay and pasture);
- $4 per acre for fenced native forage (land not cultivated);
- $4.50 per bee hive;
- 20 cents per square foot for covered crops (greenhouses, mushroom production); and,
- $100 per acre for perennial horticultural crops.

***How do producers apply for the program?***
Pre-printed application forms for FIAP 2002 will be mailed out directly to Alberta producers who applied for acreage payment programs in 2001. Those who did not claim in 2001 will need to contact Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Rural Services Division at 780-422-9167 for an application form. Forms will also be available at Alberta Agriculture hub offices, AFSC offices, rural MLA offices and on the Alberta Agriculture web site at www.agric.gov.ab.ca.

***What is the program deadline?***
The deadline for applications to be submitted to Alberta Agriculture is November 30, 2002.

***When will payments be issued?***
An immediate advance payment of 85 per cent will be issued as soon as completed applications are received. A final payment of 15 per cent will be issued after all applications are received and assessed.

***Will there be a maximum payment under the program?***
Yes. The maximum payment is $100,000 per individual for the cultivated acre component (tame forage and annual cropland), $100,000 for the native forage component and $100,000 for each of the covered crop, perennial horticultural and beehive components. Corporations with five or more shareholders are eligible for up to $500,000 under each component.

***Where can producers go for more information?***
For more information contact Alberta Agriculture's Rural Services Division at (780) 422-9167, toll free by dialing 310-0000, call Alberta Connects at 310-4455, or Alberta Agriculture's web site at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca>.

To have forms mailed to your home address, call the Alberta Ag-Info Centre at 1-866-882-7677.

## Financial breakdown of FIAP 2002

| | |
|---|---|
| • $4 per acre for fenced native forage – 17.3 million fenced native forage acres (est.) | $69.2 million |
| • $7.15 per acre for cultivated annual crops – 22 million cultivated crop acres (est.) | $157.3 million |
| • $10 per acre for tame forage – 9.2 million tame forage acres (est.) | $92.0 million |
| • $4.50 per operational bee hive – 220,000 hives | $1.0 million |
| • 20 cents/sq. ft. for covered crops (greenhouses and mushroom production) – 12.5 million sq. ft. (est.) | $2.5 million |
| • Perennial horticulture crops 10,000 acres (est.) | $1.0 million |
| • Administration | $1.0 million |
| Total | **$324.0 million** |

***Note:*** Cultivated acres includes all annual crops excluding cultivated hay and pasture. All figures are estimates based on 2001 and preliminary 2002 acres.

***Hub office locations where applications forms can be picked up:***

**Airdrie**
Airdrie Agricultural Centre
917 Irricana Road
Bag Service #1
Airdrie, Alberta T4B 2C1

**Barrhead**
Provincial Building
6203 - 49 Street
Barrhead, Alberta T7N 1A4

**Camrose**
Camrose Professional Centre
5015 - 50 Avenue
Camrose, Alberta T4V 3P7

**Fairview**
Provincial Building
Box 159
10209 - 109 Street
Fairview, Alberta T0H 1L0

**Grande Prairie**
Provincial Building & Courthouse
10320 - 99 Street
Grande Prairie, Alberta T8V 6J4

**Lethbridge**
Agricultural Centre
100, 5401 - 1 Avenue South
Lethbridge, Alberta T1J 4V6

**Medicine Hat**
Provincial Building
346 - 3 Street S.E.
Medicine Hat, Alberta T1A 0G7

**Olds**
Provincial Building
5030 - 50 Street
Olds, Alberta T4H 1S1

**Red Deer**
Provincial Building
4920 - 51 Street
Red Deer, Alberta T4N 6K8

**Stettler**
Provincial Building
4705 - 49 Avenue
Stettler, Alberta T0C 2L0

**Stony Plain**
Provincial Building
4709 - 44 Avenue
Stony Plain, Alberta T7Z 1N4

**St. Paul**
#35, Provincial Building
5025 - 49 Avenue
St. Paul, Alberta T0A 3A4

**Vermilion**
Provincial Building
4701 - 52 Street
Vermilion, T9X 1J9

***Note:*** Brooks, Lacombe, Leduc and Oliver locations do not have forms for pick up.

***AFSC Office locations where forms can be picked up:***

**Airdrie**
Agriculture Centre
917 Irricana Road
Airdrie, Alberta T4B 2C1
(403) 948-8543

**Athabasca**
Provincial Building
Rm 100, 4903 - 50 Street
Athabasca, Alberta T9S 1E2
(780) 675-4007

**Barrhead**
Provincial Building
Main Floor, 6203 - 49 Street
Barrhead, Alberta T7N 1A4
(780) 674-8282

**Brooks**
Provincial Building
220 - 4 Avenue W
Brooks, Alberta T1R 0E9
(403) 362-1262

**Calgary**
Deerfoot Atrium Building North
Suite 170, 6815 - 8 Street NE
Calgary, Alberta T2E 7H7
(403) 297-6281

**Camrose**
Professional Building
Suite 103, 5015 - 50 Avenue
Main Floor (West Side)
Camrose, Alberta T4V 3P7
(780) 679-1738

**Camrose**
Professional Building
Suite 200, 5015 - 50 Avenue
2nd Floor (North Door Entrance)
Camrose, Alberta T4V 3P7
(780) 679-1258

**Cardston**
Provincial Building
576 Main Street
Cardston, Alberta T0K 0K0
(403) 653-5154

**Castor**
4902 - 50 Avenue
Castor, Alberta T0C 0X0
(403) 882-3770

**Claresholm**
Provincial Building
109 – 46 Avenue W
Claresholm, Alberta T0L 0T0
(403) 625-3534

**Drumheller**
Provincial Building
201 Centre Street
Drumheller, Alberta T0J 0Y0
(403) 823-1684

**Edmonton**
J.G. O'Donoghue Building
Main Floor, 7000 - 113 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T6H 5T6
(780) 415-1216

**Fairview**
1st Floor, Provincial Building
10209 - 109 Street
Fairview, Alberta T0H 1L0
(780) 835-2703

**Fairview**
2nd Floor, Provincial Building
10209 - 109 Street
Fairview, Alberta T0H 1L0
(780) 835-4975

**Falher**
M.D. Building
Main Street
Falher, Alberta T0H 1M0
(780) 837-2521

*Cont'd on page 3*

**Foremost**
Provincial Building
218 Main Street
Foremost, Alberta T0K 0X0
(403) 867-3666

**Fort Vermilion**
Agriculture Canada Experimental Farm
Fort Vermilion, Alberta T0H 1N0
(780) 927-4209

**Grande Prairie**
Rm 1001, Provincial Building
10320 - 99 Street
Grande Prairie, Alberta T8V 6J4
(780) 538-5355

**Grimshaw**
5306 - 50 Street
Grimshaw, Alberta T0H 1W0
(780) 332-4494

**Hanna**
Provincial Building
401 Centre Street
Hanna, Alberta T0J 1P0
(403) 854-5525

**High Prairie**
Provincial Building
5226 - 53 Avenue
High Prairie, Alberta T0G 1E0
(780) 523-6507

**High River**
129 - 4th Avenue SW
High River, Alberta T1V 1M4
(403) 652-8313

**Lacombe**
5718 - 56 Avenue
Lacombe, Alberta T4L 1B1
(403) 782-6800

**Lamont**
5014 - 50 Avenue
Lamont, Alberta T0B 2R0
(780) 895-2266

**Leduc**
County Building
4301 - 50 Street
Leduc, Alberta T9E 7H3
(780) 986-4088

**Lethbridge**
County of Lethbridge Building
200, 905 - 4 Avenue S
Lethbridge, Alberta T1J 0P4
(403) 381-5240

**Manning**
116 - 4th Avenue SW
Manning, Alberta T0H 2M0
(780) 836-3573

**Medicine Hat**
Provincial Building
107, 346 - 3rd Street SE
Medicine Hat, Alberta T1A 0G7
(403) 529-3600

**Olds**
Provincial Building
#101, 5030 - 50 Street
Olds, Alberta T4H 1S1
(403) 556-4334

**Oyen**
212 Main Street
Oyen, Alberta T0J 2J0
(403) 664-3677

**Ponoka**
Provincial Building
#103, 5110 - 49 Avenue
Ponoka, Alberta T4J 1S1
(403) 783-7071

**Provost**
Provincial Building
5419 44 Avenue
Provost, Alberta T0B 3S0
(780) 753-2150

**Red Deer**
5579 - 47 Street
Red Deer, Alberta T4N 1S1
(403) 340-5379

**Red Deer**
Provincial Building
301, 4920 - 51 Street
Red Deer, Alberta T4N 6K6
(403) 340-5326

**Rimbey**
Provincial Building
5025 - 55 Street
Rimbey, Alberta T0C 2J0
(403) 843-4516

**Sedgewick**
Flagstaff County Building
4902 - 50 Street
Sedgewick, Alberta T0B 4C0
(780) 384-3880

**Smoky Lake**
Provincial Building
108 Wheatland Avenue
Smoky Lake, Alberta T0A 3C0
(780) 656-3644

**Spirit River**
1st Floor, Provincial Building
4602 - 50 Street
Spirit River, Alberta T0H 3G0
(780) 864-3896

**St. Paul**
Provincial Building
5025 - 49 Avenue
St. Paul, Alberta T0A 3A4
(780) 645-6221

**Stettler**
Provincial Building
4705 - 49 Avenue
Stettler, Alberta T0C 2L0
(403) 742-7536

**Stony Plain**
Provincial Building
4709 - 44 Avenue
Stony Plain, Alberta T7Z 1N4
(780) 963-0600

**Strathmore**
219 - 3rd Avenue
Strathmore, Alberta T1P 1K1
(403) 934-3616

**Taber**
Provincial Building
5011 - 49 Avenue
Taber, Alberta T1G 1V9
(403) 223-7900

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*Cont'd on page 5*

**Vermilion**
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## Greenhouse crop growers eligible for drought assistance

The Alberta government has come to the aid of its agricultural producers with a $324 million Farm Income Assistance Program (FIAP) solely funded by the province. The greenhouse crop growers are eligible to apply for FIAP at $0.20 per square foot.

Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, Greenhouse Business Development Specialist, Crop Diversification Centre North, Edmonton, comments, "This is an opportunity for growers to use these funds to invest in water and irrigation related equipment. In a survey conducted by the Alberta Greenhouse Growers Association in 2001, 36 per cent of Alberta greenhouse crop growers use municipal water, 35 per cent use water from dugouts, 33 per cent use well water, 5 per cent use water from irrigation canals and 4 per cent used water directly from rivers. Only 12 per cent of growers recycle water and those are primarily vegetable growers."

The data indicates that greenhouse crops grower have an opportunity to invest in their future by installing recycling and bio-filtration equipment. For example growers can consider purchasing a reverse osmosis system so that poor quality well water can be used for greenhouse crop irrigation.

"Like other agricultural producers, greenhouse crop growers' livelihood depends on the availability of good quality water and here is a good opportunity to invest in the future viability of greenhouse operations," says Mirza.

There are several commercial water treatment technologies that can be used by greenhouse crop growers. Sand filters can get rid of many micro-organisms from waste water. Ozone and Ultraviolet irradiation can control algae and many fungi and bacteria. Chlorine and hydrogen peroxide offers many benefits.

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## Common scab of potatoes

Every year, Alberta Agriculture fields numerous calls about scab on potatoes. Common scab, a bacterial disease caused by *Streptomyces scabies*, is present in most potato production areas.

"Scab is usually of greater economic importance in tubers grown for the fresh market than in those grown for processing," says Michele Konschuh, potato specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Brooks. "Scab symptoms are almost always limited to the tubers. The disease does not affect yield, but it can greatly reduce tuber quality, and severely affected tubers may require deep peeling by consumers and processors."

Scab lesions may be superficial (russet scab), slightly raised (erumpent scab), or sunken (pitted scab). At harvest, lesions are usually rough in texture, and tan to dark brown. Mature lesions are circular, generally 5-10 mm in diameter, but may be irregular in shape and often coalesce. Specialists believe that the type of lesion is determined by the aggressiveness of the infecting strain, the scab resistance of the potato cultivar and the environment. Tuber lesions are generally not vulnerable to secondary storage rots; therefore the disease does not affect the storability of the crop.

"Common scab is believed to be introduced into fields on seed potatoes, although there have been reports that Streptomyces species pathogenic to potatoes were present in some native soils before potatoes were ever grown there," adds Konschuh. "Once introduced, Streptomyces scabies survives in the soil indefinitely. Common scab can survive in soil on decaying plant debris, in old feed lots, or in fields heavily manured with animal wastes. It survives passage through the digestive tracts of animals and is distributed with manure.
S. scabies usually survives best in soils with a pH 5.5 to 7.5. Applying lime raises the pH of the soil and may aggravate a problem with this disease."

In a recent review article, it was concluded that harvested tubers become scabby primarily by infection through soil containing Streptomyces scabies and not from scabby seed tubers. The disease is most severe in tubers that develop in warm, dry soils. Wet soils inhibit the activity of the pathogens. Coarse-textured soils that dry out quickly are therefore more conducive to scab than are fine-textured soils. Potato cultivars

*Cont'd on page 6*

vary considerably in scab resistance, but none is immune. Continuous cropping with potatoes, especially scab-susceptible cultivars, often increases the populations of these pathogens, with a resultant increase in disease severity. S. scabies has also been reported as a pathogen of other root crops, such as beet, turnip, rutabaga, radish, carrot and parsnip.

Management of common scab can be very difficult. Prevention depends on a combination of practices:

- avoid planting scabby seed tubers.
- increase the time between successive potato crops (3 to 4 years is helpful).
- plant moderately resistant cultivars whenever possible (see table).
- maintain high soil moisture (80 to 90% of field capacity) for 4 to 6 weeks beginning at tuber initiation (swelling of stolon tips).
- avoid planting other susceptible root crops in the rotation (beet, turnip, rutabaga, radish, carrot and parsnip).
- green manure crops, such as rye, millet, and oat, have been reported to reduce the incidence of scab.
- avoid application of soil amendments that increase soil pH.
- avoid applying animal manure or other animal wastes to soil where potato production is intended.

### Fresh market cultivar resistance to *Streptomyces scabies* (potato scab):

| Susceptible | Moderately Resistant | Highly Resistant |
|---|---|---|
| ***Red Skinned Potatoes:*** | | |
| AC Peregrine Red | Cal Red | Chieftan |
| Red Pontiac | Cherry Red | Nordonna |
| Sangre | Norland | Red Cloud |
| | | Red Ruby |
| | | Viking |
| White Potatoes: | | |
| Cal White | AC Ptarmigan | |
| Irish Cobbler | Eramosa | |
| | Superior | |
| | Kennebec | |
| ***Yellow Potatoes:*** | | |
| Bintje | Adora | Albina |
| Yukon Gold | Agata | Dali |
| | Island Sunshine | |
| | Penta | |
| | Provento | |
| | Sante | |
| ***Russet Potatoes:*** | | |
| Ranger Russet | | Gold Rush |
| | | Russet Norkotah |
| | | Russet Burbank |
| ***Other:*** | | |
| | Caribe | |

*Contact: Michele Konschuh*
*(403) 362-1314*

## Equine aging and exercise

Just when does a horse get old? At what age should you start treating your horse like a senior? What can be done to increase the longevity, vigor and strength of a horse?

These questions and more were answered in a very informative presentation by Karyn Malinowski, Ph.D., a professor and extension specialist in equine science and director of the Equine Science Center, Rutgers University, New Jersey, at the 2002 Alberta Horse Breeders and Owners Conference, held in Red Deer this past January.

Dr. Malinowski and her team, Cynthia Betros, Elsa Schock, Vivien Roegner, Charles Kearns and Kenneth McKeever, undertook a 12-week study to research aging in horses.

"The wonderful fact this research brought to light is that at 15-years of age, our horses are not old," says Malinowski. "With properly controlled diet and regular exercise, horses in the 15-year plus age group can still be enjoying an active healthy life."

In the study, 18 Standardbred mares of varying ages were exercised for 12 weeks. Three groups of horses were formed, having average ages of 7, 15 and 27.

"The middle-aged mares in our test group reached the same levels of aerobic performance as the younger mares. The oldest mares, however, did not have the capability to sustain the intensity of exercise compared with the younger animals," adds Malinowski. "The older mares did improve over the course of exercise, and they also secreted more endorphin than the two younger groups. Endorphins are naturally produced substances that have a pain-killing effect in the body. In other words, their more active daily regimen had other beneficial side-effects for these older horses."

Before the horses were included in this study, the following physical factors were checked: weight, dentition, pituitary, thyroid, kidney and liver function. The horses were put on a diet suited to their age group. The older horse's diet included slightly more protein, 12 per cent. Their diet also contained phosphorous and calcium.

"Older horses can have more delicate digestive systems, and some of the horses in the study were given their food as a 'soup'," says Malinowski. "The soup was measured out at one-half gallon of water per pound of food. This ensured that the horse was taking in adequate water and their caloric consumption was increased. When working with an older horse, it's also recommended to compensate for environmental conditions, such as extreme heat or cold. In these conditions, older horses should receive 125 per cent of the national recommended consumption of vitamins and minerals."

*Cont'd on page 7*

The exercise regimen for the three test groups consisted of a five-minute warm-up; 15 minutes of exercise of sufficient intensity to raise their heart rate to 60 per cent; 15 minutes of exercise of sufficient intensity to keep their heart rate at the 60 per cent mark; and, five minutes cool down. The effects after 12 weeks of this exercise training showed that while the older age group did not have the same maximal aerobic capacity, they were able to raise their air intake and oxygen use considerably. Older horses do have the capacity to get fit and along with that increased fitness came overall health improvements.

"The most remarkable changes came in the middle-aged group of horses. They were able to increase their air intake and their maximum heart rate to almost the same level as the five-year old horses," says Malinowski. "This study showed that at age 15, horses may be in their middle years, but they are not old and should be exercised and worked to keep them in top physical condition."

"It was a pleasure to have Dr. Malinowski come to Alberta and present these research findings at the Alberta Horse Breeders and Owners Conference," says Les Burwash, horse specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Airdrie. "The speakers making presentations at the conference are experts in their discipline and we strive to bring the latest research and information to Alberta equine enthusiasts."

The Alberta Horse Breeders and Owners Conference is an annual event held each January. Dates for the next conference are January 10 to 12, 2003. Conference attendance has been steadily increasing, with the 2002 conference topping all attendance records with over 600 registered participants. To be on a mailing list to receive registration information, contact Burwash at (403) 948-8541.

*Contact: Les Burwash*
*(403) 948-8541*

## Delegates participate in a horse-less Horse Show

Nearly 120 4-H members and leaders will attend the 8th Annual Provincial Horse Classic from July 31 to August 2, 2002 at Olds College. For these three days, delegates will compete in various activities and have an opportunity to learn new information.

On the first day of the program, participants will compete for top honors in the Horse Bowl Contest. "4-Her's must work as a team to solve a horse related problem focused on horse husbandry," comments Allison King, provincial 4-H project events coordinator. "Members also enjoy the Print Marketing session where they use their marketing skills to develop an one-page advertisement and deal in person with potential buyers."

On August 1st, members will participate in the Hippology contest. "Delegates begin the day by looking at slides and writing a quiz, and then they will rotate through numerous stations that test a variety of aspects about horsemanship," says Henry Wiegman, provincial 4-H agriculture specialist. "During the afternoon, members are encouraged to share information with teammates to create a solution to a given scenario in the Senior Team Problems and Junior Team Activities."

At clinics offered during the event, members also have the opportunity to learn new skills such as vaulting, lunging and polo training. Guest speakers will lead the sessions and provide insight into various techniques that can be used.

During the weekend, delegates will accumulate points in various activities with hopes of being selected as a representative of Alberta 4-H at the Denver Western Round-up Horse Competition in January 2003.

Thank you to AMA Insurance, Burwash Horse Gear, Gas Alberta, Lammle's Western Wear, SSG Gloves, and United Farmers of Alberta for their endless contributions to Horse Classic.

*Contact: Allison King — (780) 427-4462*
*Henry Wiegman — (780) 427-4532*

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# Agri-News Briefs

## Alberta 24-hour crisis lines

Many Alberta farm families are facing a very difficult year. Often when a situation seems insurmountable, it helps to talk things through with someone who isn't directly involved, someone who will listen. Alberta has several crisis lines that Albertan's can access.

- Some Other Solutions (SOS), a counselling service covering northeast Alberta, can be reached toll free, 24 hours a day at 1-800-565-3801
- The Support Network covers most of Alberta and provides a 24-hour suicide prevention and distress line at 1-800-232-7288
  - in the greater Edmonton area call 780-482-HELP (4357)
  - in the Vermillion area call 1-800-661-4606
  - in the Red Deer area call (403) 340-1120
  - in the Calgary area call (403) 266-1605
  - in the Lethbridge area call (403) 320-1212
- Walk-in counselling is also available at The Support Network, #301 – 11456 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton. There is no fee and no appointment is required. Call (780) 482-0198 for further information
- PACE Crisis line (Providing Assistance, Counselling and Education) serves the Peace region with a 24-hour crisis line at (780) 539-6666.

## Field day at CDCS

The Special Crops and Plant Pathology Programs are hosting an open house on July 31, 2002. The day starts with registration and coffee at the picnic shelter at the Crop Diversification Centre South in Brooks. At 9:30 a.m., trailers will begin going out to the plots to see some of the pulse, corn and herb work being done by the Special Crops and Plant Pathology Programs at CDCS. The trailers will return to the picnic shelter at 12:30 p.m. for lunch. Lunch is provided with the $10.00 registration fee. Pre-registration is required.

Pre-register with Mayumi Tanigami Bunney at (403) 362-1307, fax (403) 362-1306, or email at <mayumi.tanigami.bunney@gov.ab.ca>. As it can be very warm out in the plots the end of July, don't forget a hat, sunscreen and mosquito repellent.

***Special crops on display*** – herb demonstration plots; new pulse and other special crop demonstration plots; drybean - seed size studies; field peas - irrigation, plant density and soil N study; chickpeas - seed size study; fall seeded spice and pulse crops; corn - cultivar evaluation plots; field pea - cultivar evaluation study; dry bean - minor use registration studies. ***Plant pathology demonstrations include*** – chickpeas - seed treatment to control Rhizoctonia root rot, Ascochyta blight & Botrytis blight: foliar spray to control ascochyta blight; dry bean - seed treatment to control Rhizoctonia & Fusarium; soybean - seed treatment to control Rhizoctonia root rot; lentil - chemical control of Rhizoctonia Botrytis blight; and field peas - chemical control of Rhizoctonia blight. For further information, call the CDCS in Brooks at (403) 362-1305.

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# Agri-News

August 5, 2002

## Understanding the federal Livestock Drought Tax Deferral

For farmers and ranchers, "drought" is one of the nastiest words in the English language. When there's no rain, there's no crop, no pasture, no livestock, no nothing. Last year things were just plain dry, especially in southeast parts of the province. This year north-central areas are in the spotlight, and the intensity's been turned up a few notches.

"One of the first and most urgent problems that drought creates is the lack of pasture and feed for grazing livestock," says Ted Darling, risk management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Airdrie. "If the situation is serious enough, there's no other answer but to sell part of the breeding herd, and that can translate into major income tax problems."

To ease the financial pain of writing a significant income tax cheque during the same year that your net income has been slashed by drought, the federal government created the ***Livestock Drought Deferral***. This arrangement is somewhat unique because it's written into the ***Income Tax Act*** (section 80.3(4)), but it comes into effect only when formally requested by a provincial government. In 2001 and for the first time ever, all of Alberta was designated a drought area On July 24, 2002, federal Agriculture Minister Lyle Vanclief announced that the entire province will continue its designation as a drought area for 2002.

Here's how the ***Livestock Drought Deferral*** works. If your municipality is identified as a drought area, a portion of the income from the sale of breeding animals can be deferred at least until the next taxation year. Here's some of the fine print:

- "Breeding animals" refers to cattle, sheep, bison, elk, deer and other "grazing ungulates" that are more than 12 months old and kept for breeding purposes. For most people, this means cows, bulls and replacement stock. Horses kept for PMU (pregnant mares' urine) may also qualify
- The deferral is available only if your inventory of breeding animals at the end of your tax year has been reduced to 85 per cent or less of what it was at the beginning of the year. You must have reduced your breeding herd numbers by at least 15 per cent.
- If you've reduced your herd to between 70 per cent and 85 per cent of its beginning numbers, you'll be able to defer 30 per cent of the income created by the sale (less any breeding herd purchases).

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Alberta AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

- If you've reduced to 70 per cent or less of your original herd, you can deduct a full 90 per cent of the income created by the sale (net of breeding herd purchases).
- In the case of consecutive drought years, the deferral continues until the drought designation ends. For example, now that all areas are designated for 2002, revenue deferred in 2001 doesn't have to be reported until 2003.
- To qualify you must be "carrying on a farming business" in a drought affected area. That means if you traditionally pasture your herd in a drought area or if you move your herd from a drought area to a non-drought area, you'll likely fit the criteria.

"The bottom line here is that a 15 to 29 per cent reduction in breeding herd numbers qualifies you for a 30 per cent tax deduction while a 30 per cent or more reduction in numbers allows you to deduct a full 90 per cent of the income created by the sale," adds Darling. "By itself a tax deduction is seldom an adequate reason to make an important management decision but an obvious strategy here is to make sure you're aware of these threshold numbers if you have to reduce your breeding stock. At tax time next April you wouldn't want to discover that you missed a deduction by two or three animals."

This is a good news - bad news story. Drought is obviously bad news, but if you can find a few strategies to help ride it out, that can be positive. Remember, these are complicated legal and accounting issues and you should always consult with accredited professional advisors.

If you have questions or require further assistance on this topic, please call the
Ag-Info Center toll free at 1-866-882-7677.

*Contact:* *The Ag-Info Center*
*1-866-882-7677*

## The federal Livestock Drought Tax Deferral explained

On July 24, 2002, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada announced that livestock producers affected by this summer's drought would be eligible for a one year tax deferral on the sales of their breeding livestock.

To qualify for the deferral, the taxpayer must meet two conditions:

1. The farming business was located in a Prescribed Drought Region (PDR) at some time during the 2002 fiscal period. All of Alberta has been designated a PDR.
2. The breeding herd was reduced, by sale or other means, by at least 15 per cent. Breeding animals include bovine cattle; bison; goats; sheep; deer, elk, and other similar ungulates that are kept for breeding; and horses you breed to producer pregnant mare's urine for sale. All breeding animals must be older than 12 months.

"Two calculations are involved in qualifying for this deferral," says Dean Dyck, financial business analyst with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Red Deer. "First, you must determine how much your breeding herd decreased. Just take the size of your breeding herd at the end of the 2002 fiscal period and divide it by the size at the end of the 2001 fiscal period. Remember that heifer calves born in 2002 do NOT qualify. As long as this figure is not more than 85 per cent, you can defer part of your income received in 2002 from the sale of breeding animals.

"Secondly, you must determine your net sales amount. This is your proceeds from the sale of breeding animals less the cost of breeding animals you purchased in the 2002 fiscal period."

Determining the amount of your deferral:

- if your herd is reduced by at least 15 per cent but less than 30 per cent, then you can defer up to 30 per cent of the net sales amount;
- if your herd is reduced by more than 30 per cent, you can defer up to 90 per cent of your net sales amount. You do not have to defer all of this income. You can include any part of it in your 2002 income.

The deferred income must be reported in the fiscal period that ends in:

- the year beginning after the period or periods when the region stops being a PDR;
- the year when a farmer dies; or
- the first year when the farmer is a nonresident

Utilizing this tax deferral may be an advantage if:

- you will be selling a considerable portion of your cow herd this summer and buying back breeding stock next year, especially with projected higher feed prices this winter;
- your planned cull cow and/or bred heifer sales this fall will result in a 15 per cent reduction in your overall breeding herd numbers;
- you are already planning on scaling down or selling off your cow herd. This will allow you to take advantage of current prices and spread out the income over two tax years.

It is very important that you seek professional accounting advice with this deferral. There are a number of options available that can be tailored specifically for your operation. You can also contact one of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's risk management specialists or financial business analysts for more information.

If you have questions or require further assistance on this topic, please call the Ag-Info Center toll free at 1-866-882-7677.

*Contact:* *Ag-Info Centre*
*1-866-882-7677*

## Water ways and means

Pumping water from an adjacent property, especially when the weather is dry and water is scarce, can cause problem situations. Determining who has the right to use surface water, whether it be for watering trees, livestock or for other water uses, is a question that needs to be checked before water is pumped or used.

Surface water is water in rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, sloughs or puddles. Alberta Environment regulates and allocates the rights to use water, including surface water.

Before issuing a licence for a body of water, Alberta Environment first ensures that there is enough water to protect the aquatic environment and meet existing water needs. Approval is then based on the availability of water in a particular source. Approval to use or divert water is not based on the potential use of the water. Any potential user can apply to divert water – Alberta Environment follows the same process and first ensures there is enough water to protect the environment, taking into account existing uses for that water

Under the ***Alberta Water Act***, many water related activities, including use and development, require either a licence or an approval. Landowners that get water from a municipal source must have a licence before using any surface water

If there is surface water on a piece of property and the landowner is not hooked up to a municipal source, use of up to 1250 cubic metres can be used for household purposes, such as watering the garden or several animals, is permissible without a licence. However, landowners must have a licence to use water on their land for livestock watering and crop spraying unless they qualify as a Traditional Agricultural User. Landowners must have a licence to use larger amounts of water, such as for irrigation

Temporary Diversion Licences are available for situations where the amount of water needed is likely to be small and only for a single growing season. An agreement from the local authority (municipality, municipal district or county) is needed to pump across roads or public lands, and an agreement from the landowner where the surface water is located is also needed. It should be noted that the landowner is under no obligation to allow neighbours to pump from their surface water source

For more information on water use in Alberta, call 310-0000 and ask for the nearest regional office of Alberta Environment or visit Alberta Environment's web site at <www.gov.ab.ca/env/water>. When calling, please have the legal description of your land and name of the municipality available

*Contact* *Robert Moyles*
*(780) 427-6267*

## Avoid tilling written-off crops

The 2002 growing season has not been kind to annual crop producers across Alberta. The extreme lack of precipitation, which has been further accompanied by record high temperatures, has resulted in many crops being written off. The time has come for many farmers to begin planning for next year's crop, and conserving moisture and reducing the risk of soil erosion should be their first priority.

"Using cultivation to kill off any remaining crop or growing weeds will help conserve whatever moisture is left in the soil profile," says Rick Taillieu, reduced tillage agronomist, Alberta Reduced Tillage LINKAGES, Olds. "However, it also inhibits the soil's ability to capture future moisture and leaves the soil surface very vulnerable to both wind and water erosion. Every tillage pass contributes to losses in soil moisture because the soil is exposed to the elements, including direct sunlight and higher wind speed at the soil surface."

Farmers who want to recharge the moisture in their soil profile can do so with effective and economical herbicide applications. Chemfallowing will control the unwanted crops and weeds from depleting the soil of both moisture and nutrient reserves and at the same time leave the soil protected from the elements and thus reduce the risk of soil erosion.

"Undisturbed land has dramatically greater water infiltration rates and is therefore better able to absorb any rainfall that may come in late summer or this fall," adds Taillieu. "Rainfall simulation experiments have shown that undisturbed land can often absorb one inch of water in as little as minute, while a single cultivation pass can mean the same inch takes seven or more minutes to absorb. This reduced infiltration rate often results in run-off and therefore less moisture being stored for future crops."

If conditions stay very dry, there's likely to be very little germination of weeds following a chemical application. Tillage operations, on the other hand, often stimulate weed growth by moving otherwise dormant weed seeds to near the surface and providing good seed to soil contact. If moisture conditions improve, with some rains in August, the standing crop residues will provide an opportunity to direct seed a winter cereal crop this fall

Winter wheat, as an example of a winter cereal crop, can provide producers with an opportunity to get some seeding done this fall, and allow the crop to take advantage of some snowmelt moisture that would otherwise not be useful in spring seeding systems," says Dale Soetaert, winter cereal agrologist with Ducks Unlimited Canada, Edmonton. "Winter wheat requires very little moisture to germinate and shallow seeding (less than 1") allows the crop to emerge with very little rainfall, even in these dry conditions. A winter wheat crop will also effectively compete with spring germinating weeds, such as wild oats, and allow for increased savings on crop inputs.

*Cont'd on page 4*

Spring stands this year looked very promising across the Parkland region of Alberta; drought conditions have hindered its growth, but perhaps not to the extent of other spring seeded cereals. A winter wheat stand also aids in conserving moisture due to the fact that spring tillage is non-existent, allowing for optimal infiltration of moisture in a zero disturbance situation."

Winter wheat production does require direct seeding and standing stubble to aid in winter survival. By spraying out written-off acres and not tilling them, the little bit of vegetative growth that is left standing in the field, will provide enough stubble cover and snow-trapping potential to increase the chances of winter wheat survival over the winter. Typically, seeding by September 15 can be challenging due to rotational constraints and labour challenges. This year is providing an opportunity for producers to spread their workload through fall seeding and early harvest of next year's winter wheat crop.

For more information on direct seeding, contact Rick Taillieu at (403) 556-8235. For more information on winter cereal production, contact Dale Soetaert at (780) 489-2002.

*Contact: Rick Taillieu — Dale Soetaert*
*(403) 556-8235 — (780) 489-2002*

## *Drought status & some things to consider*

The lack of moisture this spring and summer has provided challenges in laying-in feed and grazing supplies for stock for many prairie livestock producers. There are a few things Alberta producers should consider as they manage the challenges these dry conditions create.

**The drought situation is not localized** – Agriculture & Agri-food Canada – Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) average rainfall and pasture situation maps <www.agr.gc.ca/pfra/drought.htm>, highlight that the bulk of the prairies are suffering from a shortage of moisture. Feed and grazing to supplement stock may be hard to locate and may require bringing it in from considerably further away. Bidding for these fiber sources will be competitive.

**You need information to manage logically** – however, it's important to filter what is reported in the media by screening for objectivity and relevance. Cool heads make better decisions.

**Situations vary from producer to producer** – remember to make decisions based on your status, not what everyone else is doing. Some producers have the good fortune of having feed and grazing on hand. Some are in a financial position to cope with the cash flow implications of seeking alternate feed sources. Others are not. At issue are the local situation, available options, and your financial ability to manage your way through the drought.

**Options may not be extreme** – it may not be an all-or-none situation. Focus on middle ground solutions now to generate cash flow. This may allow you to work for profit later. If you have the opportunity and cash flow, build in flexibility and options for your operation in the upcoming weeks and months.

**Creative solutions and opportunities may go beyond the borders of the farm** – this may involve partnering with neighbors and family. The goal is to maintain the core of your productive asset base, if the opportunity is available.

Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development has compiled a group of reference materials for producers regarding:

- managing in drought situations,
- a variety of options & solutions, and
- analysis and decision making – guides to making rational decisions in potentially stressful circumstances

This information can be accessed through the Alberta Agriculture web site <www.agric.gov.ab.ca> or by calling the Alberta Ag-Info Centre toll free at 1-866-882-7677.

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*Sr. Economist: Production Economics*
*Economics & Competitiveness Division*
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## *Revitalizing rural Alberta goal of new development initiative*

Expanding community and economic opportunities in rural Alberta is the aim of a new provincial initiative.

A newly appointed MLA Steering Committee is leading the first major step in the development of a cross-ministry rural development strategy. The committee will examine the challenges and opportunities facing Alberta's rural communities and will put together a framework to link a rural development strategy with Alberta's economic development strategy to create an integrated approach to rural development. The framework is being developed by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development in participation with Alberta Economic Development, Alberta Municipal Affairs and Alberta Community Development.

Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, stressed the importance of this initiative. "This year's agricultural disaster has really hit our rural communities hard," she says. "It's this kind of extraordinary circumstance that emphasizes the importance of comprehensive, long-term rural development strategy."

Wainwright MLA Doug Griffiths and Innisfail-Sylvan Lake MLA Luke Ouellette will act as co-chairs for the committee, which will lead the development of the strategy.

*Cont'd on page 5*

"One of the issues we will be looking at is how to increase the profile of rural Alberta communities," says Griffiths. "We know that there are many advantages to living and working there; however, we need to get that message out so that we can not only attract businesses to rural Alberta, but also attract the necessary people and skills."

Ouellette adds that government has an important role in working with rural communities to help them capitalize on Alberta's economic activity. "Communities need to know where they can go to access government resources to achieve their goals. An integrated rural development strategy would provide this and more."

The first phase of this initiative, currently underway, involves input from community focus groups on what rural Alberta should look like in 2015. Next, a rural development framework will be put forward for approval by the government in the fall. If approved, government ministries will begin to build the recommendations into their business plans.

*Contact:* *Doug Griffiths*
*MLA-Wainwright*
*(780) 427-3020, Edmonton or*
*(780) 842-6177, Wainwright*

*Luke Ouellette*
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*(780) 415-9402, Edmonton or*
*(403) 227-1500, Innisfail*

*Glen Werner*
*Director, Rural Development Initiative*
*Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development*
*(780) 427-2409, Edmonton*

*Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access of Edmonton numbers*

## Summer 2002 – Alberta Ag Tourism takes off

A new partnership was launched in May 2002. It started with Bill Reynolds, director of Tourism Product Development with Alberta Economic Development moving over to Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development for a three-year term. The partnership was sealed when these two departments joined forces with Travel Alberta to assist the Alberta Ag Tourism industry to jumpstart growth.

"One major initiative, the Field Assessment and Study Tour completed in July, loosely followed the Cowboy Trail corridor," says Sharon Stollery, rural development specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Stony Plain. "The focus of the tour was on property assessments and partnership development. Watch Alberta's tourism industry website, <www.tourismtogether.com>, for 'lessons learned' from the tour."

The second major initiative under the Ag Tourism Partnership is a test market promotional campaign. The campaign ties into Travel Alberta's ***Made to Order*** summer program providing greater exposure and awareness.

"***Get Back Getaways*** was chosen as a slogan to unify Ag Tourism events, attractions, tours, accommodation and shopping that encourage Albertan tourists to Get Back to the Farm, Get Back in the Saddle, Get Back to the Garden, Get Back to Wholesome Goodness and Get Back Together," adds Stollery. "The focus is on the farms, ranches, gardens, and food that make up Alberta's Ag Tourism scene. It is designed to reflect the consumer interest in nostalgia, a slower pace, healthy living, a relationship with the bountiful land and a sense of roots."

The campaign includes a newly created website category called Agricultural Experiences on <www.travelalberta.com>. As well, several Get Back Getaway newspaper articles and ads are being featured in the Calgary Herald and Edmonton Journal to catch the attention of the urban traveler. Get Back Getaway radio ads will also be heard on many rural and urban radio stations.

"On a weekly basis, we are supplying Ag Tourism events and seasonal feature listings for the radio ads focused on the four theme areas – farm, ranch, food and garden", continues Stollery. "As well, look for the Travel Alberta Events Cruiser and rural radio cruisers out and about this summer distributing print material on Alberta Ag Tourism."

For more information on the Ag Tourism Partnership Initiative contact Bill Reynolds at (780) 427-4424, e-mail: <bill.reynolds@gov.ab.ca>, or Sharon Stollery at (780) 968-3514, e-mail: <sharon.stollery@gov.ab.ca> at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

*Contact:* *Sharon Stollery*
*(780) 968-3514*

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## Country-of-origin labeling meeting

The impact of the country-of-origin labeling provision contained within the U.S. Farm Bill was the primary topic during the July 25, 2002 meeting of members of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA). Alberta, a formal member of NASDA, and representatives from Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec participated in the one-day meeting in Chicago, Illinois. Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, acted as co-chair of the meeting. McClellan emphasized that both the government and the livestock industry are concerned about the impact country-of-origin labeling may have on cross-border meat and livestock trade. During the meeting, strengthening trading links and market access were also discussed. Currently, Alberta exports $2.4 billion worth of livestock products to the U.S. For further information, contact Lisa Baer, Bilateral Relations and Strategic Initiatives, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, (780) 427-4148, Edmonton. Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton.

## Drought proofing farm water supplies

Information on improving the long-term supply and quality of dugout water is available across Western Canada in a new publication called ***Quality Farm Dugouts***. Published by a unique consortium called the Prairie Water News, an inter-provincial, inter-governmental partnership, the free publication combines the latest research, technology and practical information for farmers to plan and construct new farm dugouts, or maintain their present dugouts. The 124-page publication focuses on a typical farmyard dugout that is filled from surface water runoff and is used for livestock watering and, in some areas, for household use. It was designed to help farmers develop and maintain a dugout water system to meet all of the farm's water needs for years. It provides a systems approach to improving the supply and quality of water, starting with information on understanding the dugout watershed. The workbook contains nine modules and five worksheets. Agencies that make up Prairie Water News, include Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development; Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada; Manitoba's Ministries of Agriculture, Environment, Health and Intergovernmental Affairs; Sask Water Corporation; and, the Saskatchewan Research Council. The goal of the group, formed in 1990, is to develop strategies and information to improve farm water supply and water quality across the Canadian Prairies. Free copies of ***Quality Farm Dugouts*** are available at Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, or by calling toll free in Alberta at 1-800-292-5697 and (780) 427-0391 in the Edmonton area. The publication is also on the Alberta Agriculture web site at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/esb/dugout.html>. Agricultural Water Specialists are available to assist producers with their farm water problems. They can reached by calling (780) 422-5000. For further information, contact Bob Buchanan, agricultural water specialist, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, (780) 427-4615. Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton.

## AAIC meeting

The next meeting of the Association for the Advancement of Industrial Crops (AAIC) is being held in Saskatoon, SK, on August 24 to 28, 2002. This is the first time the meeting will be held in Canada. The AAIC has been involved in the development of new and industrial crops since 1979. Details about the meeting can be viewed on the AAIC web site at <www.aaic.org>. Anyone who has an interest in new or industrial crops is welcome to attend. The AAIC has published five books that were the collected papers from previous meetings. Dr. Stan Blade, with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development was one of the speakers at the last conference. He will also publish a book chapter on his topic, Canadian crop diversification. All abstracts of previous meetings can be viewed at the web site. For anyone wishing to present a paper or poster, or wanting to attend the meeting, please visit the web site at <http://www.aaic.org/meetings.htm>. The AAIC is an international, nonprofit educational and scientific organization established to:

- encourage and promote the activities of those involved in the production, processing, development, and commercialization of industrial crops and products derived from industrial crops
- educate and inform members and others through national and international meetings and conferences
- provide the public, industry, and government policy makers with expert scientific, engineering, and business information on developments in the utilization and commercialization of industrial products from agricultural crops.

For further information, contact Dr. Stan Blade, director Crop Diversification Unit with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, (780) 415-2311, Edmonton.

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# Agri-News

August 12, 2002

## Importing feed bales, not rats, into Alberta

Due to the extensive and prolonged drought in Alberta and the continued importing livestock feed, concern is growing about accidentally importing live rats into the province. While the possibility of live rats being imported by truck or rail is real, the chances are much slimmer than most people think.

"There are all kinds of rumours and unsubstantiated reports of rat-infested feed bales arriving in the province," says John Bourne, vertebrate pest specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Vermilion. "Albertans need to put this concern into proper perspective and get the facts first before jumping to conclusions. Several factors directly affect the possible delivery of live rats into the province. Due care and attention can substantially reduce the risk."

First, people need to realize that many areas in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario, where feed is coming from, are free of rats. Second, most livestock feed heading to Alberta is this year's crop, coming directly from the field. Recently harvested bales are reasonably safe because rats do not live in open cropland. Third, most feed will be hay or annual forages, which rats avoid because these crops offer them poor nutrition and inadequate cover. These facts alone significantly reduce the risk of rats being in feed bales.

"All recently harvested feed bales will be at very low risk, including green feed and straw bales that normally carry the highest risk," adds Bourne. "Rats are only found in permanent structures and may invade those forage bales located in or close to farmyards, sometime after stacking."

Travel time and other factors will also affect the whether or not rats are brought into the province. Rats require moisture to survive, particularly in warm weather. During a long period of travel over several days, rats would likely perish from dehydration. Also, bales arriving in Alberta will be consumed quickly or will be mechanically processed in tub grinders or bale busters; this immediate use also greatly reduces rat survival.

"Truckers, haulers and farmers should use common sense when loading and handling feed bales bound for Alberta," says Bourne. "Receiving farmers should also be on the lookout for telltale signs of rats on board livestock feed. An adult Norway rat is no small animal – with a body that measures up to 20 cm (8 inches) and a tail nearly as long, about 15 to 17.5 cm (6 to 7 inches).

*Cont'd on page 2*

## This Week

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"The tail is the most distinguishing feature of a rat. It is cylindrically shaped and appears hairless, but in fact, has ring scales around the length of the tail that can be easily seen. Short, stiff bristly hairs protrude from the ring scales, which are only found on Norway rats. The tail of a Norway rat is never as long as the animal's body."

Norway rats have buff or cream coloured undercoats, and are gray to brownish-gray along the sides and back, with black hairs throughout. All four feet are quite small and have very small claws; the upper sides of the feet are sparsely covered with fine, white hair. Rats do not have webbing between the toes.

The eyes, ears and nose of a rat are present and easily seen, although inconspicuous. Rat droppings are also unique as they are rather large and round shaped or blunt at both ends, when compared to most other rodents whose droppings are tapered. Rat droppings are shaped like a black olive pit and measure up to 1.9 cm (¾ of an inch). Rats produce 50 to 70 droppings per day, so no matter where the rats are, their droppings always give them away.

If farmers want more information or see a rat or signs of a rat, they should call their municipal agricultural fieldman, by-law enforcement officer or Fish and Wildlife officer. If rats have been identified and confirmed, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development should be contacted for follow up action at (780) 853-8225.

*Contact: John Bourne*
*(780) 853-8225*

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## Drought factsheets available

Producers facing beef cattle management decisions through the drought have access to some new factsheets to help with these decisions. With proper information and timely management, producers will be able to make decisions that best suit their operations.

Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development has developed a series of factsheets that addresses drought management strategies. These factsheets focus on production, management and financial information that may provide answers to some of the problems created by the drought.

Several factsheets deal with feeding cattle, including ***Roughage Needs***, ***Minimizing Wastage***, ***Bedding Without Straw***, ***Utilizing Annual Cereals*** and ***Feeding Corn Grain***. Other factsheets cover financial management topics, including: ***Working with Your Lender***, ***Income Tax Deferral*** and ***Partial Budgeting***.

Information from many of these factsheets will be featured in articles in ***Agri-News*** over the next few weeks. The factsheets are also available on Alberta Agriculture's web site at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca>. Alberta Agriculture encourages producers to use this site when looking for information. Producers who don't have access to the internet can check with libraries, neighbors or education councils for access points.

The media are also encouraged to use these articles for newspaper or radio spots. New factsheets are being added weekly.

*Contact: Ag-Info Centre*
*1-866-882-7677*

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## Assessing drought management strategies

Drought is putting many Alberta and Saskatchewan cattle producers under significant pressure. In addition to last year's shortfalls, cattle producers face an immediate shortage of pasture and a prospective shortage of roughage for the coming winter. It is critical to be aware of the situation and assess the alternatives.

"The objective for cattle producers is to "buy feeding days" of forages and grazing while maintaining a reasonable level of productivity," says Neil Blue, P.Ag., market specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Vermilion. "Budget projections will involve maintaining all, some or none of the core productive asset base – the cow herd."

In assessing these alternatives, it's important to view them from the decision-making criteria of affordability (cash flow), profitability and desirability (including reversibility and longer term goals).

**Cash flow** – is a simple statement detailing cash coming in versus cash going out. It gives an indication of net cash position and requirements for financing. It indicates the financial risk accompanying each alternative considered. The time frame is short-term.

Specific questions addressed in the cash flow analysis include the following:

- Are there cash flow resources for the alternative(s) being considered?
- Will heavy culling generate sufficient cash to meet forage needs?
- Are there savings or assets to sell, or borrowing arrangements in place to cover the costs of renting more pasture, fencing, or buying forage and/or grain?

**Profitability** – it's important to determine whether measures taken to bridge the drought situation will be "paid back" through long-term profits from cattle production. Even if the cattle operation may not make a profit this year, is the operation profitable in the long-term?

*Cont'd on page 3*

"When assessing longer-term profitability, keep in mind where we are in the cattle cycle," adds Blue. "Because of droughts here and in the US in the last couple years, it is likely that the current cattle cycle is being extended, with the price cycle not peaking for a couple more years."

Income tax is another consideration. A deferral program is in place for drought areas this year, to provide the option of deferring part of the proceeds of a major reduction in herd size. Each of these elements can affect long-term profitability.

**Desirability** – this relates to the question of whether or not the management steps being implemented will take the producer down the longer-term path that is wanted for the operation. Will these steps result in a business structure that is compatible with income, risk considerations and personal goals?

**Is the decision reversible** – how quickly and easily can a decision that is made now be reversed? For example, a cattle producer who has a purebred herd may not be able to quickly replace animals sold due to drought. The selection of a group of animals with desirable genetics can take years. Other commercial producers may be able to rebuild a drought-reduced herd within a year or two.

**Goal-based management** – is the decision one that fits within the context of long-term farming goals? It is important that drought-related decisions do not conflict with the overall business strategy (such as maintaining low unit production costs).

A few specific alternatives to consider, using these assessment factors, include the following:

- reduce cattle numbers (consider marketing alternatives; do not just "get rid" of them)
- it may be possible to sell a portion of one's own herd and take on the custom care for someone else's cattle. This approach frees up cash flow while maintaining the use of cattle assets on-farm
- move cattle to a remote pasture (consider net cost)
- rotational grazing (increase pasture efficiency)
- use "written off" or poor condition annual cropland for pasture, greenfeed or silage
- seed annual cropland to cereals when it rains
- provide supplemental feed (e.g. purchased forage, calf creep feed)
- wean calves early (cow enters winter in better condition, reducing feed requirements)

"Although the stress caused by the drought is high, and unpleasant decisions may need to be faced, it is important to gather all the relevant facts, assess all the various alternatives, and make informed, rational decisions," says Blue. "This process, in itself, helps to restore a sense of control to a weather-induced situation that is not of our making."

If you have questions or require further assistance on this topic, please call the Ag-Info Center toll free in Alberta at 1-866-882-7677.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Contact:* | *Neil Blue, P.Ag.*<br>*(780) 853-8239* | *Ag-Info Centre*<br>*1-866-882-7677* |

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# Determining yields of drought-stressed crops

As the drought continues and pastures become scarce, many farmers and their cattle are

beginning to look over the fence at the neighbor's cereal crops as a potential source of pasture. Although these crops may be short, there may be sufficient grazing to maintain a herd while the wait for rain continues.

"Before farmers make an agreement to use these crops, they must first determine what the potential yield of the crops are," says Arvid Aasen, pasture agronomist and forage specialist with the Western Forage Beef Group, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Lacombe Research Centre. "This step can be done by both parties 'eyeballing' the crops and giving their best guess, by asking the crop adjuster from Alberta Agriculture Financial Services Corporation, or by accurately measuring the crop yields."

Swathing an area of the crop, baling it and weighing the bales can provide a measure of these crop yields. The area of crop baled can be measured, and a yield can then be determined.

Another method is to cut and weigh square meter samples from the crop to determine yields. If this sampling is done in 10 areas of the field and the weights are averaged, this method should give a good average yield of the field. Moisture levels can be determined by using the microwave method.

Microwave oven method for determining moisture content of forages

1. Weigh out approximately 100 g sample of the forage (W1), excluding the weight of the container. Weigh to the nearest gram
2. Spread the weighed forage sample on a paper plate or place it in a paper bag and put it in the microwave oven.
3. Place a three-quarters full 8 oz glass of water in the oven so the sample doesn't ignite.
4. Heat at 80 per cent to 90 per cent of maximum power for four minutes.
5. Remove the sample, mix it and weigh it.
6. Continue to reheat for two-minute intervals, reweighing each time. To prevent burning, use lower heat and 30-second time intervals as the sample approaches being dry. If the weight of the sample does not change after two or three drying intervals, it is 100 per cent dry. This is the final

*Cont'd on page 4*

dry weight (W2). A slightly charred sample should not affect the accuracy of the moisture determination, but if the sample burns, the test should be repeated.

7. Calculate moisture content as follows:

$$\text{Moisture content/per cent} = \frac{(W1 - W2)}{(W1)} \times 100 = \%$$

***For example:*** if sample weight (W1) is 100 grams and dry weight (W2) is 36 grams, the moisture percent is 64 per cent, calculated as shown.

$$\text{Moisture content/per cent} = \frac{100 - 36}{100} \times 100 = 64\ \%$$

### Other agronomic considerations

Many cropped areas are not properly fenced; however, perimeter fences can easily be constructed using electric fence. This same fencing can be used to limit cattle access to the whole field. Crossfencing will reduce waste and encourage the cattle to consume whole plants.

"There may be some merit to swathing the crop before grazing to reduce waste and to prevent the crop from becoming too mature," adds Aasen. "The cattle should have limited access to these swaths to prevent waste and to encourage them to eat the complete plant."

Before grazing, the crop should be analyzed for nitrates to prevent nitrate poisoning.

If you have questions or require further assistance on this topic, please call the Ag-Info Center toll free in Alberta at 1-866-882-7677.

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*(403) 782-8027*

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*1-866-882-7677*

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# Roughage needs for livestock

Many producers facing drought are struggling with securing roughage to meet their needs. Roughage supplies are limited; the question is how much roughage must be secured.

"In an average year, a beef cow will consume 2.5 per cent of her body weight in dry matter intake," says Trevor Yurchak, beef/forage specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Athabasca. "Therefore, a 1,400 lb beef cow, seven to eight months pregnant will consume 35 pounds of dry matter per day, plus moisture and feed waste. Cows can get by with lower roughage percentages than are usually fed. Managing through drought conditions suggests that producers will need to feed less roughage, and balance nutrients accordingly."

Dairy industry research has shown that it's possible to feed higher levels of concentrate and still have a healthy cow. Concentrate is defined as grain, pellets or supplement. In an average year with average feed quality, the dairy industry is comfortable feeding 50 per cent concentrate and 50 per cent roughage, on a dry basis.

"Given the dry growing condition this year, forages will not be average," adds Yurchak. "Based on research from the mid 80's, alfalfa grown during a dry year will have significantly lower fiber. This research shows that full bloom alfalfa grown in a drought will have similar fiber levels as pre-bloom alfalfa grown in a normal year. So, if your roughage source this year is perennial forage, it will be better quality and less effective fiber, which means that feed testing and ration balancing will be imperative."

Extrapolating from the dairy industry, beef cow producers can budget on feeding a ration that has 1.0 per cent of body weight on a dry basis of concentrate. This equates to a 1,400 lb cow being able to consume a ration that has as high as 14 lbs of grain, pellets or a combination thereof per day. This amount of concentrate should be delivered twice each day – half in the morning and half in the afternoon. As well, calcium mineral supplementation, and the use of ionophores must be considered.

The remaining 14 plus pounds must come from a roughage source. As long as producers follow the 7-9-11 rule (7 per cent protein in mid-pregnancy, 9 per cent protein in late pregnancy and 11 per cent protein after calving), and energy is sufficient, the roughage portion can be filler, such as straw, hay, crop residue or other high fiber material. Both Dr. Robert Westra and Dr. Erasmus Okine refer to research that shows it is feasible to include up to 25 to 30 per cent poplar sawdust as a fiber source, with a balanced pellet or mixed with silage.

"Several nutritionists and research projects suggest that, providing the ration is balanced in terms of protein and energy, a cow can be fed at as low as 1.5 per cent of body weight in dry matter intake, rather than the average 2.5 per cent," says Yurchak. "Simply put, as long as the nutrients requirements are met, a cow can be fed less than her desired intake of dry matter.

"As long as the ration has enough protein, energy, vitamins and mineral, the same 1,400 pound cow would consume 11 lbs of concentrate and 11 lbs of roughage. The cow would not have a satisfied appetite, but would maintain production."

The following chart summarizes the amount of roughage beef producers can budget for. The numbers shown here are based on the following assumptions: 1.0 per cent of body weight coming from concentrate, total intake is limited to 2.1 per cent of body weight per day on a dry basis, the feeds are tested, the ration is balanced and it is a March-calving herd.

*Cont'd on page 5*

**Roughage needed per cow (lbs. dry matter/year)**

| Cow weight (lbs) | 1,200 | 1,300 | 1,400 | 1,500 | 1,600 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Days on Feed* | | | | | |
| 200 | 2,640 | 2,860 | 3,080 | 3,300 | 3,520 |
| 250 | 3,300 | 3,575 | 3,850 | 4,125 | 4,400 |
| 300 | 3,960 | 4,290 | 4,620 | 4,950 | 5,280 |

The chart is based on a temperature of -15 degrees Celsius. Colder temperatures require modifications. Cows must be sorted by body condition regularly. **Producers must check with their nutritionist.**

If you have questions or require further assistance on this topic, please call the Ag-Info Center toll free in Alberta at 1-866-882-7677.

| *Contact:* | *Trevor Yurchak* | *Ag-Info Centre* |
|---|---|---|
| | *(780) 675-8219* | *1-866-882-7677* |

## Another look at winter wheat

Over the past five years, winter wheat acreage on the prairies has almost doubled. This large increase is due in part to agronomically superior varieties. Varieties with good winter hardiness, good to very good lodging resistance and resistance to piebald and rusts are now available

"Winter wheat is not resistant to bunt and therefore should be treated with a systemic seed treatment," says Don Wentz P.Ag Reduced Tillage Agronomist, Lethbridge. "Winter wheat is suited to low disturbance direct seeding technology and can take advantage of early spring moisture. Reduced input costs and spreading out of the workload over fall and spring are some of the advantages producers consider when growing winter wheat."

Information is available on winter wheat that can help producers make management decisions. This information is designed for both producers who have grown winter wheat in the past and for new producers. For new producers who live in selected areas of Alberta where Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) have an interest in increasing nesting habitat, funding support may also be available. These target areas are south of Lethbridge along the Milk River Ridge and in central Alberta near Viking. The DUC program is available through Parrish and Heimbecker as well as Cargill. Contact a DUC agent for more details at (403) 362-4827 in the south or (780) 489-2002 in the Edmonton area.

Reduced Tillage (RT) Linkages, the Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission and DUC have joined forces to bring producers and agronomists together to discuss growing winter wheat," adds Wentz.

The RT-Linkage home page <http://reducedtillage.ca> has information on management issues related to growing winter wheat. Under the heading ***Knowledge Tidbits***, a screen opens a list that includes winter cereals. By clicking on that subject, a number of scientific and production papers that cover topics from seeding to harvest can be accessed. Click on ***What's New*** and you can join the Winter Wheat discussion group. Click on ***Direct Seeding Factsheets*** and factsheets on ***Direct Seeding Winter Wheat***, ***Downy Brome Control in Direct Seeding Systems***, as well as a number of other related topics can be accessed.

"For producers who haven't planted winter wheat for some time, one of the big changes is the large number of varieties to choose from," says Wentz. "AC Bellatrix, AC Readymade and AC Tempest are Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada varieties that were developed at the Lethbridge Research Station. Several varieties from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, are also available, such as CDC Osprey and CDC Falcon."

If planning to plant winter wheat this fall, line up the seed now and get your seeding equipment ready. Planting winter wheat does conflict with harvest, so planning is beneficial. Winter wheat is suited for direct seeding into standing stubble, and snow collected in the stubble is a good insulator for winter crops and helps reduce potential wind erosion.

Planting shallow, about 2.5 cm (1 inch), with low disturbance direct seeding equipment is the key to a successful winter wheat crop," says Wentz. "Research has shown that improper seed placement results in delayed emergence, later maturity and weak, spindly plants. Winter wheat can take advantage of fall rains and successfully establish with as little as 8 mm (1/3 inch) of rainfall."

Winter wheat is subject to the same diseases and insects that spring crops are. Wheat streak mosaic is a main concern and can devastate winter wheat yields. Breaking the "green bridge" will reduce the potential of wheat streak mosaic. The green bridge is the volunteer cereals, green crop residue or other green material that can host the virus that is transmitted by the Wheat Curl mite to the next generation of crop. A burnoff with glyphosate at least five to seven days before seeding is recommended to reduce the potential of spread of wheat streak mosaic.

Weed control is also important. Fall germinating winter annuals such as stinkweed, flixweed and shepherd's purse can be controlled with a phenoxy herbicide. Perennial, biennial or volunteer cereals can be controlled with a pre-plant, non-selective glyphosate herbicide.

"Research has shown that planting in early September, between September 10 and 20 in the south, between September 1 to 10 in the Lacombe area and between August 25 and September 1 in the Vermilion area, is best," continues Wentz. "Planting earlier is usually better than later. The ideal is to have a plant that has two to four leaves and is starting to develop its first tiller before freeze-up. It is recommended that you seed at about 1.5 to 2.0 bushels per acre to maximize yields."

*Cont'd on page 6*

Winter wheat responds to good soil fertility. Current recommendations are to seed place the phosphorus and other required nutrients in the fall at the time of planting. Nitrogen can be applied several ways: before seeding with a banding operation, during seeding either as seed-placed or side-banded or spring broadcast. Information about past management practices and a current soil test should be used when making decisions about fertility requirements.

Besides the traditional dryland areas, many irrigation farmers have looked at winter wheat as an option over other cereals.

Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development's ***Varieties of Cereal and Oilseed Crops for Alberta- 2002*** (Agdex 100/32) reports that new winter wheat varieties have good to very good lodging resistance. This information can also be found on Alberta Agriculture's web site at <>.

Winter wheat fits well into crop rotations with oil seed crops. Winter wheat has flexible market potential and uses as a milled grain, feed wheat, distilled or even grazing crop. Winter wheat is milling quality wheat that is classed as Canada Western Red Winter (CWRW) and is eligible for export.

*Contact:* *Don Wentz*
*(403) 381-5857*

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# Agri-News Briefs

## Farm Animal Care ALERT

Animal Care Action Line and Resource Team – ALERT provides a confidential alternative for producers and the public to report any concerns regarding the care of animals. The resource team is made up of trained volunteers who represent Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC). The team offer non-confrontational solutions to help producers practice responsible animal care standards. AFAC and ALERT get involved before a situation becomes a crisis. It is a service that is also available for self-reporting – a resource producers can contact for assistance and counsel with management problems. ALERT is one more way to help both farm animals and producers. For more information, contact AFAC in Calgary at (403) 932-8050 or e-mail <info@afac.ab.ca>.

# Agri-News

August 19, 2002

## Bedding without straw

"Proper bedding is an integral part of any beef production system," says Rod Carlyon, business development officer with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Westlock. "Given the challenges on the straw supply this year, here are a few ideas, some options and information producers may want to consider."

**Plan** – now is the time to think through the winter bedding season. Looking at what has been done in past years will provide an estimate of the volume of material needed. Take into consideration what type of livestock and at what times of the year bedding will be needed. Are there any material alternatives?

**Space** – think about ways to secure more space per animal for over the winter. Include feeder cattle, replacements, cows and bulls when determining space needed. Try to have the animals in large areas, so they do not loiter and socialize on the bedding area. Try to locate the bedding area away from the feed and water areas. Plan wind shelter needs now. Remember that more fencing may be required. Necessary fencing should be seen to as soon as possible.

**Snow** – mature livestock can bed in fresh, undisturbed soft snow. They will stay clean in it, and the snow provides some insulation as long as the livestock have access to it. Compacted, frozen, hard, dirty snow is not an option; however, with lots of space, and perhaps portable wind shelters, snow can work.

**Wood fiber** – this is a viable alternative currently used extensively in the feedlot industry. Generally speaking, wood has more moisture absorbency, but less insulation value than straw. Feedlot cattle have been shown to keep cleaner with wood products than straw. The volume of manure removed from wood fiber bedded pens was less than straw bedded pens. Some purchasing considerations:

- per cent moisture of the product (kiln-dried may be 10%, chips may be 45%)
- product type (e.g. bark, shavings, chips, sawdust, paper and mixes of these)
- dollar value of product at plant and cost of delivery
- volume discounts (often over 1,000 tonnes)
- delivery time frame
- payment terms
- contaminants (e.g. large wood pieces, glue etc.)

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Most wood processing plants, from fencepost to furniture manufacturing processors, have small particle wood by-products. Livestock producers must realize that these companies have often developed an existing market for these products, and selling their by-products to producers will be a change in their business arrangement.

**Peat moss** – this product is currently used in the horse industry. Producers who have peat land, or close access to peat land, could consider it as an alternative. Factors to be considered include getting the peat moss stockpiled and dried, dustiness of the product, and contaminants in the product.

Dry, clean bedding that provides insulation from the cold can mean significant savings on feed requirements for any beef producer.

For more information, call the Ag-Info Center at 1-866-882-7677.

| *Contact:* | *Ag-Info Centre* | *Rod Carlyon* |
|---|---|---|
| | *1-866-882-7677* | *(780) 349-4466* |

For toll free access in Alberta, dial 310-0000 first.

# Feed waste management

As feed costs rise, the issue of feed waste becomes more important in livestock operations.

"There are two main types of feed waste," says Rod Carlyon, business development officer with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Westlock. "One type is feed that is stored, but not delivered or consumed by the animal. The second type is feed that is delivered, but does not match the animals' needs."

Here are some quick points to consider regarding each of these types of feed waste.

### Physical feed waste

- an optimum feed waste goal should be less than five per cent
- producers should examine current feeding equipment and consider modifying or replacing it to improve efficiency
- increase feeder space per animal to decrease spillage by having less feed in each feeder
- figure out the value of efficient feeders (or feed bunks). For example, if feed cost per cow per day is $1.75 and the goal is to decrease waste by five per cent, attaining this target will save 8.75 cents/cow/day. Over a 250-day feeding season, this total amounts to $21.88/cow. If you budget 15 cows per feeder, the savings work out to $328 per feeder
- seriously question feeding losses if currently feeding livestock on the ground
- examine the feed storage system. Consider tarps, plastic covering, feed storage inoculants and feed storage location to see if improvements can be made

### Match feed to livestock type and needs

In a high cost feed year, an operation must attend to certain key factors, and these aspects are non-negotiable:

- feed test
- balance all rations
- monitor all classes of livestock rations weekly, if not daily
- monitor livestock condition
- use a professional nutritionist
- for beef cattle, purchase and use the computerized ration-balancing program ***Cowbytes***.

The ***Cowbytes*** program is available by calling (780) 427-4309. For toll free access in Alberta, dial 310-0000 first.

If you have questions or require further assistance on this topic, please call the Ag-Info Center at 1-866-882-7677.

| *Contact:* | *Ag-Info Centre* | *Rod Carlyon* |
|---|---|---|
| | *1-866-822-7677* | *(780) 349-4466* |

# Acquiring standing cereals as greenfeed

While early August rain and the recent cooler weather have brought a bit of relief, Alberta's drought situation is largely unchanged for most livestock and crop producers. Some cereal crops may have the potential to produce reasonable grain yields, while other do not. Many are salvageable only as greenfeed or grazing.

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development staff at the Alberta Ag-Info Centre are answering many questions from producers facing important agronomic and financial decisions. Information to help address some of the issues surrounding the purchase of standing cereal crops for greenfeed is available by calling the Alberta Ag-Info Centre at 1-866-882-7677, and there is also information posted on the Alberta Agriculture web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca>.

"Some of the most important issues are related to production," says Russel Horvey, Alberta Ag-Info Centre. "It is critical that the decision to cut and bale a crop for greenfeed is not delayed any longer than necessary. While high nitrate levels are showing up in some drought-damaged crops, the best strategy is to put the crop up in the best shape possible and test for nitrates later.

Sample and stack feed from different fields separately. Feeds from fields with low nitrate levels can be blended with problem feeds to reduce the overall feeding risk. If you're planning to graze a drought-damaged crop, it's recommended that you test for nitrates first. Testing labs are working on a 24-hour to 48-hour turnaround time (for nitrate levels) from the time they receive a feed sample."

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More information on nitrates in feeds is included in the article ***Nitrate Poisoning and Feeding Nitrate Feeds to Livestock*** posted on the Alberta Agriculture web site at <http://www.agric.gpv.ab.ca/agdex/400/0006001.html> or by calling the Ag-Info Centre.

Estimating the yield of a salvaged cereal crop can be done by weighing bales, or cutting and weighing square metre samples. For details, refer to the article ***Determining Yields of Droughted Crops***, available on the Alberta Agriculture web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agdisaster/droughtoptionsdetermining.html>.

Finally, there are several economic and financial issues to consider. Producers must determine whether or not this greenfeed option makes sense for both the cattle producer and the owner of the crop. One of the best ways to look at these kinds of questions is to prepare a partial budget that considers both the buyer's and seller's points of view.

Examples of partial budgets have been posted on the Alberta Agriculture web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agdisaster droughtoptionsgreenfeed.html>. The economic benefit of using cereal crops for greenfeed depends heavily on the potential grain yield. A common average rule suggests that barley crops will yield about one ton of silage for each 10 bushels of barley. Adjusting for moisture, that translates to a 1000 pound bale per acre. A 10-bushel barley crop may be better used as greenfeed, but as potential yields rise, the analysis becomes less clear and the average rule may not hold. Remember that the partial budgets posted on the Alberta Agriculture web site are only examples and that an analysis of your own situation may produce different results.

In general, the total amount of risk is reduced by cutting a crop for greenfeed. Once it's cut, the crop's chances of further deterioration are fairly low. If the buyer has found a guaranteed feed source and the seller doesn't have to bear the risk of more problems before harvest, this outcome can result in a win-win situation.

If you're planning to bale or graze cereal crops insured by Alberta Agricultural Financial Services Corporation (AFSC), make sure that you contact your local office first," says Ted Darling, business risk management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Airdrie. "They have regulations regarding salvage or change-in-use that must be followed."

Information on salvage and change-in-use is included in the article ***Crop Insurance Information – July 2002 Pre-harvesting or Putting Crops to Another Use*** on the Alberta Agriculture web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agdisaster/droughtoptionsinsurance.html>.

*Contact*　*Ag-Info Centre*
*1-866-882-7677*

## Provincial 4-H Dairy Show results

Nearly 80 4-H members from across the province took home fond memories of the 56th annual Provincial Dairy Show. Held in Red Deer from July 16 to 18, 2002, the event was filled with learning opportunities, new friendships and a chance for delegates to touch up on their dairy industry knowledge.

Jessica Simanton, an 11-year member of the Lacombe 4-H Dairy, was thrilled to see an increase in attendance from previous years. "A few years ago, there were only four clubs competing. This year we had seven, and the numbers still seem to be rising." As the winner of senior showmanship last year, Simanton had the opportunity to be the junior showmanship judge this year. She feels that it was a great learning experience and an excellent opportunity since she plans on judging more in the future.

The show started with the *Dairy Husbandry Quiz*, where members were encouraged to learn textbook information. Delegates later competed in the *Knowledge Skills Competition*. Junior members participated in a *Dairy Bowl*, where they answered various dairy industry questions. More advanced questions were given to the intermediate members in a *Dairy Jeopardy*. Senior members used their previous knowledge to solve a problem concerning dairy biosecurity. All members also participated in the *Judging Competition* and the *Showmanship* class.

Jessica Schakel, a first year 4-H member, learned a great deal over the past year. "Everyone has helped me out so much. It was great to learn the proper way to clip dairy cattle and what a judge looks for in an ideal animal. I enjoyed my first year and am excited to be back next year!" she said. Highlights of the weekend for Schakel included meeting new people, showing her calf and participating in the evening activities.

The volunteers, leaders, event staff and numerous sponsors were a great assistance in making this years' ***Provincial 4-H Dairy Show*** a success. Thank you to the major sponsors: Alberta Dairy Industry, Alberta 4-H Program Trust, and Gas Alberta Inc. for their continued dedication.

For more information about 4-H, please visit the web site at <www.4h.ab.ca> or contact the provincial 4-H office at (780) 422-4H4H.

*Contact:*　*Alberta 4-H Office*　*Janet Kerr*
*(780) 427-4532*　*(403) 742-7547*

# Signs sell... good signs sell more

Whether a business is selling bison meat, bedding plants or cattle genetics, profits can be maximized through innovative merchandizing signs.

"Merchandizing with signs can happen in and outside your business," says Kerry Engel, ag entrepreneurship specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Westlock. "Effective signs repeat an advertising message over and over as people pass, which reinforces brand recognition and hopefully entices customers to stop and buy."

Signs need to tell your customers who you are, where you are, what exactly you have for sale and when you are open and closed.

Various types of signs are used by rural diversification businesses. They include business identification, temporary (for special events), directional and rural facility signs.

"Alberta Transportation maintains control of all signage and development within 300 meters (1000 feet) of all provincial highways and within 800 meters of major intersections," adds Engel. "Signs within cities are under the jurisdiction of the city. Signs on local roads are under the control of the county or municipal administration. Alberta Transportation, which controls signs for safety and aesthetics, has guidelines to follow when considering signing. These guidelines are outlined in the latest issue of the ***Alberta Agri-Preneur*** newsletter."

Inside a businesses, the owner has both design and placement control. Use signs to educate customers or identify best sellers. Use terms customers understand; don't get hung up on technical jargon. For example, those in the garden care business use the term pesticides. A sign that says 'Bug Control' can make it simpler for customers to find what they want.

"Whatever type of sign a business is considering – be sure to do it," says Engel. "A study on sign use showed that signs increased sales by 202 per cent."

The latest issue of the ***Alberta Agri-Preneur*** newsletter gives 12 pages of ideas for designing signs for farm diversification business. Contact Engel or Darleen Lynes at (780) 349-4466 (dial 310-0000 for toll free service in Alberta) or e-mail <kerry.engel@gov.ab.ca>.

The ***Alberta Agri-Preneur*** newsletter is published quarterly and is available for free. Check out past issues on the internet at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/food/process/nwp/index>.

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*(780) 349-4466*

# Agri-News Briefs

## Greenhouse crops – insect and disease management workshop

"Due to drought conditions, water quality is changing and more disease-causing organisms, such as *Pythium* and *Fusarium*, are being detected in the water supply," says Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, greenhouse business development specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton. "This situation has caused a significant yield reduction in many vegetable crops, and consequently, greenhouse gross revenues have been affected." To answer greenhouse growers' information needs, the Alberta Greenhouse Growers Association (AGGA) and the Greenhouse Resource and Extension Assistance Team (GREAT) of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development have organized a practical, hands-on workshop. Greenhouse crops growers will be provided with information to help them effectively manage diseases and insects. The ***Insect and Disease Management Workshop*** will be held on September 18, 2002, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at Alberta Agriculture's Crop Diversification Centre North, 17507 Fort Road, Edmonton. The workshop will cover how to recognize greenhouse crop diseases, insect life cycles, bio-control and organic management strategies and chemical control methods. The knowledge provided will enhance growers' decision-making capabilities. Workshop registration cost is $50 and includes lunch and information handouts. Cheques should be made payable to the Alberta Greenhouse Growers Association and mailed to the care of Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, CDCN, RR6, Edmonton, AB T5B 4K3. For further information, contact Mirza at (780) 415-2303. Registration information can also be found on the AGGA web site at <www.agga.ca>.

## Food Safety Info Line

It's the season to indulge in fresh fruits and vegetables! Salads, fresh fruit desserts and snacks star in summer meals. But whether you buy your fruits and vegetables at the supermarket, from a farmers' market or farm stand or harvest them from a home garden, it's necessary to handle these fresh products with the same care as other perishable foods.

Fruits and vegetables can be contaminated with organisms that can cause food-borne illness. And, because fruits and vegetables are frequently eaten raw, there is no opportunity for cooking to kill pathogens. Do you know that you should buy or pick only the amount you can use before the fruits and vegetables pass their peak of ripeness? Are you confused about the safest way to wash fruits and vegetables? Should you rewash packaged lettuce and spinach? Can you cut away a mouldy spot and safely eat the rest of the fruit or vegetable?

Western Canadians can obtain a free factsheet packed with tips for safely handling fresh fruits and vegetables by calling the Food Safety Info Line toll-free 1-800-892-8333. The consumer hotline is answered by professional home economists Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Mountain Time. For more information contact, Jane Carlyle PHEc, coordinator of the Food Safety Info Line, 1-800-892-8333.

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# Agri-News

August 26, 2002

## Turf grass a growing crop in the Peace

The Alberta/B.C. Peace area is one of the three major areas in the world for turf seed production. Along with production in Oregon and Denmark, the turf seed produced in the Peace supplies a major portion of the world's grass seed needs.

"Each year, between 80,000 and 150,000 acres in the Peace area are committed to creeping red fescue production," notes Darrell Watson, marketing manager, Peace River Seed Co-op Ltd. "The United States is the primary market for turf seed from the Peace area. Once exported, the seed is mixed with other varieties of turf seed, such as Kentucky Bluegrass, to make various grades of mixed turf seed."

The Peace has excellent growing conditions and good soil composition for growing creeping red fescue. The average yield of fescue in the area is 400 pounds per acre. Creeping red fescue is very aggressive and hardy.

Turf seed is harvested by swathing and combining. With this crop, nothing goes to waste. The straw is excellent for feed, and last year saw round bales of fescue straw being sold for $20. Even the after-processing screenings are used by local feeders as a feed supplement.

Fescue is one of the rotational crops of choice for many producers in the Peace region. Creeping red fescue is a two-year crop that is direct seeded at five to six pounds of seed per acre. When this crop is direct seeded, it is usually seeded heavier to provide a higher yield.

When creeping red fescue is under-seeded with a cover crop, or nurse crop, such as barley, canola or peas, seeding rates are one to three pounds of seed per acre.

"When it is grown with a cover crop, the fescue is allowed to grow and spread the first year, the 'clip' year. During this year, the cover crop is taken off, the field is sprayed to clean it up and then fertilized," explains Brian Wilson, production manager, Peace River Seed Co-op Ltd. "The second year is the seed crop year when the fescue is allowed to grow and produce seed. It is usually harvested in July; however, weather conditions this year delayed harvest until August."

After the seed is harvested and the straw is baled and taken off, the fescue is plowed down to take it out of rotation. An additional benefit of using this crop in a rotation is that it puts lots of fibre back into the soil. The root system of creeping red fescue is shallow, but very dense.

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AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

"Creeping red fescue is a very difficult crop to kill. It is well adapted to growing in the Peace and is relatively manageable in the poor gray wooded soil of the area," adds Wilson. "On better soils, creeping red fescue sods-up more quickly, which makes it harder to manage. When this crop sods-up, seed production is greatly reduced."

"The only forage and grass seed co-op in Canada is the Peace River Seed Co-op Ltd., in Rycroft," says Watson. "The co-op was formed in 1972, specifically for cleaning and marketing grass and legume seeds. There are approximately 800 shareholders in the co-op, with over 200 active members producing turf and forage seed in any given year. Business transactions are done with brokers and directly with companies throughout Canada, the U.S. and Europe."

Creeping red fescue seed is cleaned, stored and processed at the Rycroft plant. The co-op purchased three elevators, which gives the co-op an eight-million-pound storage capacity for rough seed. In keeping with quality assurance standards, each producer's seed is handled separately and the bags are well marked for trace-back purposes.

The newly upgraded processing plant contains a government accredited seed testing lab where grading and germinating tests are conducted. The plant also houses two production lines that can process an average of 40 to 60 fifty-pound bags of cleaned seed per hour.

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*Production Manager*
*Peace River Seed Co-op Ltd.*
*(780) 765-3737*

*Darrell Watson*
*Marketing Manager*
*Peace River Seed Co-op Ltd.*
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# Alberta leads in forage seed production

The grass and legume seed industry has been a part of the agriculture scene in Alberta for over 60 years and has grown steadily in that time. The latest figures from the Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Agriculture detail the growth of this industry in the province.the Alberta industry now accounts for 50 per cent of the grass and legume seed produced in Canada.

"In 1996, there were 226,974 acres of production in the province, and in 2001, there were 409,251 acres, an increase of 80 per cent over the past five years," says Henry Najda, with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South, Brooks. "The majority of this production takes place in the Peace River region, where most of Canada's supply of creeping red fescue seed is produced." Seed production acres in the rest of the province have increased accordingly, and new species such as tall fescue, hard fescue, sheep fescue, perennial ryegrass, meadow bromegrass and Kentucky bluegrass are now being grown along with the traditional seed crops of timothy, smooth bromegrass, crested wheatgrass, alfalfa and red clover. To assist the grass and legume seed industry, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development is participating in several projects to provide seed producers and the seed trade industry with the information they need to continue their success.

"One of the requirements in maintaining a viable, competitive and profitable seed industry is to provide a quality product for the marketplace," says Najda. "Weed seeds that are difficult to clean out, such as wild oats, foxtail barley, cleavers and quackgrass, have to be eliminated, or they significantly downgrade seed quality and affect the price paid to the producer. Seed producers of newer grass species don't have access to many registered herbicides to control these weeds. Research is currently underway that is evaluating fall-applied herbicides for these newer grass seed crops."

Evaluations of many spring-applied herbicides have been completed, and requests for the minor use registration of suitable herbicides are now being processed. Dan Cole with the Crop Diversification Division of Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton, is leading this research effort in cooperation with Najda and Calvin Yoder of the Forage and Horse Branch in Spirit River.

"The Western Grass Seed Testing Program, initiated in 1998 and headquartered at the Crop Diversification Centre South, assesses the suitability of newer grass species for seed production in western Canada," explains Najda. "Test locations are sited in all the soil zones and include irrigated sites.

Cooperators in the program include researchers with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Alberta Research Council, Manitoba Agriculture and seed producer associations in all four western provinces. This project, with the majority of entries placed in test sites in Alberta, is industry-supported by 20 seed companies participating from Canada, the U.S. and Europe. Information from this program has led to the seed production of new species and has helped diversify the grass seed industry throughout western Canada."

The Alberta Agriculture web site <www.agric.gov.ab.ca> provides up-to-date marketing and crop production information to seed producers and the seed trade. In September, this web site will have a new look and a new location for grass and legume seed production, making the information quick and easy to find. This enhancement, along with the expertise of the staff at the Ag-Info Centre (1-866-882-7677), should help provide timely information for Alberta's grass and legume seed producers.

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## Growing winter wheat in Alberta

Winter cereal crops are excellent for inclusion into a crop rotation. Winter cereals include winter wheat, fall rye and winter triticale.

If rain is received before the end of August to provide good surface soil moisture, Alberta farmers could consider seeding winter cereal crops in late August or very early September. As well as yielding an economically attractive crop, winter wheat and winter triticale can provide some fall grazing if seeded early.

"Growing winter wheat is fairly straightforward," says Ross McKenzie, senior research scientist, agronomy, with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Lethbridge. "However, management practices are quite different than for spring-seeded grain crops. To successfully grow winter wheat, a number of specific management practices must be followed."

### *Variety Selection*

In southern Alberta, AC Bellatrix is the newest and probably the best variety for most farmers to grow in southern Alberta. AC Readymade and AC Tempest are also very good varieties. In central Alberta, CDC Osprey is the best variety for both quality and winter hardiness.

### *Seeding*

Ideally, winter wheat should be direct seeded into standing stubble. Seeding into canola or pea stubble offers crop rotation advantages such as reduced weed problems, volunteers are easy to control, and there are reduced insect and disease problems. Standing stubble will help trap snow, which acts as an insulator to protect the crop from very cool temperatures. Four inches of snow will normally provide sufficient insulation to ensure overwinter survival.

"It is most desirable to seed in the first two weeks of September in southern Alberta and even a little earlier in central Alberta," says McKenzie. "This timetable allows sufficient time for plants to germinate, develop at least three leaves and develop a crown, which is the base of the shoot where secondary roots develop.

"Delayed seeding can result in poorly established plants, which results in poorer winter survival. Late seeding can also result in delayed heading, later maturity, increased weed problems and lower yield potential."

The ideal seeding rate for winter wheat is higher than what most growers use for spring wheat. Generally, winter wheat should be seeded at a minimum rate of 120 pounds per acre. Winter wheat has a considerable ability to tiller; however, the best yields are obtained with higher seeding rates. Ideally, narrower row spacing of seven to nine inches is best.

Alberta Agriculture's factsheet, ***Using 1,000 Kernel Weight for Calculating Seeding Rates and Harvest Losses*** (Agdex# FS100/22-1) is a good source of information on seeding rates. Growers can also access this information on Alberta Agriculture's web site and use the seeding rate calculator to target at least 250 seeds per square metre. The web address is <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agdex/100/100_22-1.html>.

"Winter wheat has a very short coleoptile," adds McKenzie. "The coleoptile is the extension of the seed embryo that pushes its way through the soil to the surface, from which the first leaf develops. It is important to seed winter wheat 0.5 to 1.0 inches deep. Winter wheat seeded deeper than one inch will result in reduced emergence. Deeper seeding will delay emergence and cause weaker, spindly plants that are more susceptible to winterkill."

Frequently, soil moisture is low in stubble fields in early September, and farmers must decide whether to seed into dry soil or wait for rain. Saskatchewan research has shown that winter wheat will germinate at very low soil moisture levels. Ideally, it is best to seed winter wheat in the first two weeks of September rather than wait for rain, provided that the seeding operation leaves the seed firmly covered with no more the one inch of soil.

Soil temperature can dramatically affect the time it takes winter wheat to germinate. For example, winter wheat will take only six days to emerge at a soil temperature of 20 degrees C, while it takes 12 and 30 days to emerge at soil temperatures of 10 and 5 degrees C, respectively.

"Winter wheat should only be seeded into clean fields," says McKenzie. "Volunteer grain can harbor an insect called the leaf curl mite that can transmit the wheat streak mosaic virus. Any actively growing green vegetation, such as volunteer grain or grasses, can serve as a host for the mites. If winter wheat is seeded into stubble with green volunteer or by adjacent green fields, the mites will move from the host plants into the winter wheat after emergence and spread the virus. The damage from this disease can range from severe to complete crop failure. Cultural controls are the only way to control this disease."

### *Fertilizer*

Alberta research has shown that phosphate placed with or near the seed at the time of seeding improves plant growth in the fall, resulting in better winter hardiness. Approximately 20 to 25 pounds per acre of phosphate is usually adequate and is most effective when placed with the seed.

"Most stubble fields are low in soil nitrogen," says McKenzie. "This year, soil nitrogen (N) levels in southern Alberta soils will likely be very low as a result of higher than normal rains in June. However, in central Alberta drought conditions will result in low N crop removal. Therefore, soil N levels in central Alberta will likely be higher than normal.

"Soil testing to determine N and P (phosphate) are strongly encouraged to accurately determine fertilizer requirements. It is recommended that fields be soil sampled and tested to determine optimum fertilizer requirements. If time does not

*Cont'd on page 4*

permit soil testing, or if fall soil moisture conditions are very dry, it is best to apply approximately 50 to 75 per cent of estimated N requirements at the time of seeding, soil test in late fall and then broadcast additional required nitrogen in early spring, depending on soil moisture conditions."

Previous recommendations suggested that N fertilizer should only be spring-applied, because fall-applied N may reduce winter hardiness. Research in southern Alberta over the past four years has clearly shown the fall-applied N fertilizer does not reduce overwinter hardiness when applied in balance to P fertilizer.

Research did show that N fertilizer banded before seeding sometimes dried out the seedbed and resulted in a rougher, lumpier seedbed, which had an effect on germination and emergence. Research also showed that seed-placed N fertilizer applied at rates greater than 50 lb N/ac, using urea at a seedbed utilization of 10 per cent (spreading the seed and fertilizer over 0.75 inches with a row spacing of 8 inches) with low soil moisture, had a detrimental effect on winter wheat germination and emergence.

For further information on fertilizing winter wheat refer to the factsheet ***Fertilizing Winter Wheat in Southern Alberta*** (Agdex 112/542-1). This factsheet is posted on Alberta Agriculture's web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agdex/100/112_542-1.html>.

### Weed control

Due to the competitive nature of vigorously growing winter wheat, weed pressure tends to be lower than with other crops. Winter annuals are the greatest problem; however, these can easily be controlled with inexpensive products such as 2,4-D or MCPA, preferably in late fall, but early spring application is also quite effective.

"Winter wheat can be an excellent crop to include in a crop rotation," says McKenzie. "By following simple, straightforward management practices it can be an easy and profitable crop to grow."

*Contact:* *Dr. Ross H. McKenzie*
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*Ag-Info Centre*
*1-866-882-7677*

## Alberta helps make eastern generosity a western reality

Surplus hay standing in eastern Canadian fields is one step closer to helping feed Alberta's beleaguered livestock industry, thanks to $200,000 in Alberta government assistance to the Hay West program. These government funds will help harvest and bale bumper hay crops in eastern Canada.

"Hay West organizers assure us that the generosity of others will pay shipping costs to Alberta. We couldn't stand by and watch eastern farmers plough under fields of excess hay when our livestock industry is facing severe feed shortages," says Premier Ralph Klein.

Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, adds that her department's existing budget will fund the donation. "Hay West organizers estimate that in the next 10 days, hay fields will yield up to 30,000 bales of donated hay," says McClellan. "We're asking that hay be processed into square bales to save on transportation costs."

Greg Conn, Chairman of the Alberta Cattle Commission, commended the Alberta government for its support and Hay West organizers and contributors for their efforts.

"While we realize this particular project won't meet the 650,000-tonne feed shortage in Alberta, it is certainly appreciated and will help many of our producers through this crisis. It will also go a long way towards raising awareness of the situation," says Conn.

Hay West organizer and Ontario farmer Wyatt McWilliams hopes the Alberta government donation will give producers some optimism that their industry will rebound.

"I know that western spirit won't be broken," McWilliams adds. "Your government and your eastern neighbors are just giving you encouragement to carry through."

Details of a hay distribution system will be announced soon.

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*Wyatt McWilliams*
*Hay West*
*(613) 835-3126*

*Greg Conn*
*Chairman, Alberta Cattle Commission*
*(403) 275-4400*

## Canadian Wheat Board director elections

The Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) marketing system affects all facets of the agriculture industry, including grain, livestock, value adding, exports and producer marketing activities. All producers who grow one of the six major grains, whether or not they hold a permit book, should plan to vote in the CWB election this fall. The *Canadian Wheat Board Act* allows for all 'actual producers' to vote, whether or not they hold a permit book. An actual producer is anyone who produces one of the six major grains - wheat, barley, oats, rye, flax, and canola.

*Cont'd on page 5*

"Producers should take advantage of this opportunity to help determine the future of marketing in Western Canada," says Gene Dextrase, chairman of the Alberta Grain Commission and a farmer near High Level. "All farmers should mark September 6, 2002, on their calendars to check if they are on the voters' list. The other date producers should keep in mind is December 5, 2002, the postmark deadline for all ballots for this year's western Canada election."

The (CWB) holds elections every two years in five of the 10 districts in western Canada. This fall, elections will be held in districts 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9 (more information on districts is available by calling one of the offices listed in the contact information). Eligibility also requires that farmers have reached the age of majority and are directly involved in the business of farming. Producers who hold CWB permit books should automatically be on the voters' list.

On September 6, 2002, the election coordinator will mail voter confirmation packages to all producers in districts 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9 who are on the voters' list. Producers who do not receive such a package can arrange to complete a Statutory Declaration to be put on the voters' list.

Producers who do not hold a permit book are still entitled to have a say in the CWB if they register and cast their vote. Non-permit book holders must provide the election coordinator with proof of eligibility through a three-step process:

- complete a Statutory Declaration – this form can be obtained from the CWB, the Election Coordinator, local MLA's office or by contacting Alberta Agriculture's Ag-Info Centre at 1-866-882-7677. These forms will be available after the election has been announced on September 3, 2002
- have a Commissioner of Oaths sign the Statutory Declaration. Commissioners can usually be found at most provincial offices, county offices, banks or law offices
- ensure the election coordinator, Meyers Norris Penny, receives signed declarations by October 15, 2002

Farmers who have forwarded a completed Statutory Declaration to the election coordinator or have filled out their permit book application for the new crop year will be mailed a voters' package on November 3, 2002. This package will include an actual ballot and biographies and position statements from each candidate in the voter's district.

When producers fill out their ballots, it is important to remember that the ballot is a 'preferential ballot'. On this ballot, voters rank the candidates in their district, marking '1' as their first choice and '2' as their second choice. Voters only need to rank the candidates they support, not every candidate on the ballot.

"Voting in the upcoming CWB elections ensures that farmers' concerns are voiced and heard," says Dextrase. He urges all farmers to ensure they are on the voters' list. "The CWB Board has an impact on every producer. This is your opportunity to have a voice in the future of the industry."

**Important dates:**

- September 6, 2002 – preliminary voters' list available
- October 15, 2002 – voters' list cut off – have Statutory Declarations submitted to the election coordinator.
- November 3, 2002 – voters' packages mailed to farmers
- December 5, 2002– postmark deadline for mailing completed ballots

*Contact:* *Alberta Ag-Info Centre*
*1-866-882-7677*

*Alberta Grain Commission*
*(780) 427-7329*
*www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agc*

*Myers Norris Penny*
*1-800-446-0890 (effective September 3, 2002)*
*www.cwbelection.com*

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## New feed line for sheep on the internet

A new internet feed information site assists sheep and goat producers locate desperately needed feed sources. Many commercial, purebred and small hobby flock producers are being forced into selling-off a number of their production animals, similar to others in the livestock industry.

"The western drought that has caused deteriorating pastures, and reduced hay and grain crops have been particularly tough on sheep and goat producers who must get their numbers down to ease their feed requirements," says Doug Laurie, sheep producer and secretary for the North Central Sheep & Goat Sales, Stony Plain.

Sheep auctions in the province are seeing triple the number of breeding animals going through their sales. Some locations, like Barrhead and Camrose, have increased their special sheep and goat sales to two per month to cope with the number of head leaving the farms. A very small number of the sale ewes are being picked off by a few producers that have a little better feed supply, expecting that the 50 per cent loss in the breeding flock will create a shortage of market lambs – resulting higher market prices next year.

This new feed site is located at <www.farm-online.com/feedline>. The site was established to give producers a place to easily list their need-and-feed offers. Producers who do not have a web connection can still phone-in their "feed ad" to Laurie in Stony Plain at (780) 963-6711. Laurie will post the information on the internet.

*Contact:* *Doug Laurie*
*Sheep producer*
*(780) 963-6711*
*<dlaurie@telusplanet.net >*

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## Provincial 4-H Beef Heifer Show a success

Nearly 200 4-H members spent three days competing in various classes at the 26th Annual Beef Heifer Show in Bashaw. During this three-day event, members demonstrated their grooming, judging and showmanship skills.

This year's Supreme Grand Champion Purebred went to Scott Kelder and his heifer, Ivy's Jessica. Scott, a member of the Fort Saskatchewan 4-H Beef Club, was shocked and excited about the results. "The competition was pretty tough this year, so I was very happy to have come out on top." Scott is looking forward to defending his title next year.

The winner of the Supreme Grand Champion Crossbred animal was JJA Junior Jackpot 2J, shown by Jillian Arntzen on behalf of her brother Jaron. This was a special honor as "Jaron recently passed away in a tragic accident," says Allison King, Provincial 4-H Project Events Coordinator. "He would have been happy to have received this award as his outgoing enthusiasm and continual participation was sadly missed at the event." Jaron was also the recipient of the Friend of the Provincial 4-H Beef Heifer Show award. This award is given to individuals and organizers who that have influenced the event with exceptional support and numerous contributions.

Delegates also competed in a number of events for the Annual Grand Aggregate Awards. This year's Grand Aggregate Award recipients were Risa Iwasiuk from the High Prairie & District 4-H Club, Brody Gardner from the Eagle 4-H Beef Club and Dean Arntzen from the Iron Creek 4-H Beef Club.

Thank you to the following sponsors for their continual support and dedication to the event: Alberta 4-H Program Trust, ABS Canada, Alberta Cattle Commission, Alberta Motor Association, ATB Financial, Bashaw Ag. Society, Gas Alberta Inc., Ivomec and UFA. Their contributions help make this program a success.

For more information about 4-H, please visit the website at www.4h.ab.ca or contact the Provincial 4-H Office at (780) 422-4H4H.

*Contact:* *Provincial 4-H Office*
*(780) 422-4H4H*
*(780) 422-4444*

# Agri-News Briefs

## Echinacea forum

An Echinacea forum has been planned for September 26, 2002 at the Crop Diversification Centre North (CDCN), 17507 Fort Road, Edmonton, Alberta. According to Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, greenhouse business development specialist at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's CDCN, a large number of calls were coming in asking questions about the production and marketing of Echinacea. "The growers are concerned about marketing and who the potential buyers are," says Mirza. This is an informal forum for Echinacea growers where questions will be answered on different aspects of production and marketing. Dr. Kwesi Ampong-Nyarko, special crops agronomist at CDCN, adds that many people wanted to know what the best planting times are, how to manage the pH of alkaline soils and how to increase active ingredients. Participants will have an opportunity to view a planting density trial being conducted to compare greenhouse and field growing conditions. This field trial also demonstrates the effect of different planting times on plant growth. The forum is free although pre-registration is required due to limited seating. For further information, contact Mirza at (780) 415-2303 or Ampong-Nyarko at (780) 415-2316.

## Explore Direct

***Poised for greatness...*** is the theme of the next Explore Direct conference. This conference, specifically for Albertans marketing rural Alberta products directly to consumers, is being held in Red Deer on January 20 to 22, 2003. The conference offers four different educational streams: Farmers' Markets, Direct Marketing of Meat, Innovative Marketing and Planning for Business Success. Presentations by John Stanley, international retail consultant who works with direct marketers around the globe, are some of the special features at the conference. Stanley will be conducting a pre-conference workshop, **Innovative merchandizing for profit**, as well giving one of the keynote addresses on **Image building** and conducting one of the conference sessions on **Personality selling**. For more information, contact Kerry Engel, Ag entrepreneurship unit with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Westlock, at (780) 349-4466.

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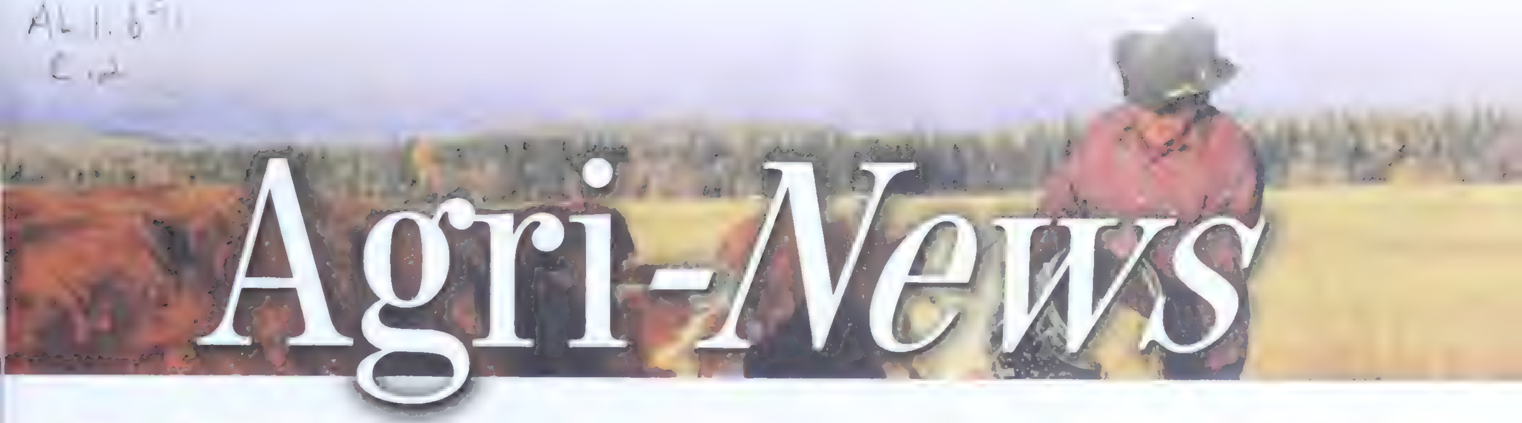

# Agri-News

September 2, 2002

## Ag Summit Action Teams present 133 recommendations

Reports from 12 industry-led Ag Summit Action Teams, detailing 133 wide-ranging recommendations, were presented to the federal and provincial governments and to the agriculture industry. The August 14, 2002 presentation marked a milestone in the two-year public consultation process that began in 2000. Action Team contributions in the Ag Summit process are now complete.

"The volunteers who prepared these recommendations recognized that the business of agriculture is complex and its impact reaches more than rural Alberta," says Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "Their recommendations need and will receive consideration by industry and by governments."

Agrivantage, the group of industry and government representatives overseeing this final phase of Ag Summit, is also preparing its own report, to be completed by year-end. Les Brost, Chair of Agrivantage, says that the report will build on the work of Action Teams by including an examination of overarching issues affecting the industry such as human capital and policy development.

"Our aim is communication and collaboration," adds Brost. "We're looking for integrated solutions that support the continued growth of a profitable, environmentally sustainable agriculture and food industry in Alberta."

Topics addressed in the Action Teams reports include: environmental stewardship, land use planning, global competitiveness, food safety, agriculture's image, equity financing, taxation, crop and livestock diversification, agriculture's long-term profitability and sustainability, rural infrastructure, entrepreneurial centres of excellence, and choice in marketing products.

Action Team reports can be downloaded from the Agrivantage web site at <www.agrivantage.ab.ca>. Printed copies of the 430-page document containing all the reports can be obtained by contacting the Ag Summit Office at (780) 422-5179 (toll-free by dialing 310-0000 first).

*Contact:* *Ken Moholitny – Assistant Deputy Minister,*
*Planning and Competitiveness*
*Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development*
*(780) 427-1957*

## This Week

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# Management of hay imported into Alberta

Due to extreme drought conditions and a lack of feed, livestock producers are importing feed from outside of Alberta. Over 1,300 tons of hay has been donated from generous Ontario producers to Alberta's beleaguered livestock producers. Feed is also coming in from Saskatchewan, Manitoba and B.C.

There is always a danger of importing potentially dangerous pests into the province, such as rats, noxious weed seeds and disease agents. While there is little likelihood of rats enduring the long train ride from the east, the danger of importing weeds is high.

"Imported weeds can gain a foothold anywhere in Alberta," says Dan Cole, weed specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "The movement of weed seeds can be of concern if the weeds are new to your area. If these weeds establish, they can be very expensive, causing crop yield reductions in future crops and increased control costs for many years. As always, weeds listed in the *Alberta Weed Control Act* as "restricted weeds" must be eradicated wherever found."

Grass and straw coming from an area that has *Fusarium graminearum*, an agent that causes Fusarium Head Blight, represents a risk for the introduction of this disease into Alberta. At present, Manitoba has some areas infected with *Fusarium graminearum*.

To control importing weeds into the province:

- check the incoming hay for weeds and weed seedpods. If found, be especially careful and keep track of where this hay is moved, stored and fed
- tarp the hay when it is being moved and clean the trucks and trailers when finished
- feed all off-farm hay in one confined area that is close and accessible, in order to make it easier to monitor for new weeds for several years. Feed hay where there is less chance of weeds establishing, for example in areas with an existing competitive forage stand or in feed bunkers. Avoid bare ground where weeds can establish easily
- restrict the movement of the livestock being fed off-farm hay – weed seeds can often pass intact through the digestive system and be spread in the manure where they can germinate and create problems
- watch for new weeds for at least 10 years. Some weed seeds have the ability to remain dormant for many years. Some of the weeds to watch for in the hay from Ontario include nodding thistle, spotted knapweed, diffuse knapweed, orange hawkweed, ox-eye daisy, white cockle, wild carrot and wild parsnip. The local Agricultural Fieldman can be contacted for pictures of these weeds and methods to control them
- contact the local Agricultural Fieldman if unfamiliar weeds are found and have them identified
- control new weeds quickly and thoroughly before they have the opportunity to spread and become more of a problem. It is especially important to prevent new weeds from going to seed
- the same procedures for controlling the feeding of the hay to prevent the introduction of imported weed seeds will also serve to reduce the risk from any *Fusarium graminearum* that may be in the hay

"Keep an eye out for new plant invaders, especially in the spring and after rain, and report any new weeds to your local Agricultural Fieldman," advises Cole. "Be choosy where you feed out-of-province hay – close and accessible for easy monitoring. Try to feed all out-of-province hay in one area of the farm to restrict the spread of weed seeds and disease. Keep track of all the out-of-province hay over the entire time period that it is being fed and monitor the areas where the manure is spread."

*Contact: Dan Cole*
*(780) 422-0919*

# Dutch Elm Disease threatens Alberta elm trees

The Society to Prevent Dutch Elm Disease (STOPDED), with the co-operation of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, is asking the public to help prevent DED by checking their elm trees for any DED symptoms. In order to help save the more than 500,000 elms growing in Alberta, Albertans must be aware of what DED is, the importance of elm trees to our communities and that DED can be prevented. A confirmed DED tree must be removed immediately to prevent further spread.

"All trees that show DED symptoms must be reported immediately," says Janet Feddes-Calpas, integrated pest management technologist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "At this time of year, if a tree is infected with DED the leaves will appear wilted and will soon curl up and become brown. Leaves on trees infected later in the season usually turn yellow and drop prematurely. These leaf symptoms are accompanied by brown staining under the bark of the tree. All suspicious elms must be tested in a lab for the presence of the fungus."

To date, surveys in southeastern Saskatchewan have identified approximately 60 DED infected elm trees. DED is a disease caused by a fatal fungus that clogs the elm tree's water conducting system, causing the tree to die usually within one or two seasons. The fungus that affects all species of elm is primarily spread from one tree to another by two species of

*Cont'd on page 3*

insect vectors, the smaller European elm bark beetle (SEEBB), and the native elm bark beetle (NEBB). The beetles are attracted to weak and dying trees, which serve as breeding sites for the beetles. Once the beetles have pupated and turned into adults they leave the brood gallery and fly to healthy elms to feed, transporting the fungus on their bodies from one tree to the next. Monitoring for the beetle is done every year throughout the province.

Firewood can harbour the bark beetles that carry the deadly DED fungus. For this reason, it is important that elm firewood not be transported into or within Alberta. Firewood is confiscated at all the Alberta-Montana border crossings.

To report any elms that show DED-like symptoms, call the Ag-Info Centre at 1-866-882-7677. For more information on DED prevention, check out the DED web page on Alberta Agriculture's web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/pests/diseases/ded/html>.

*Contact:* *Janet Feddes-Calpas*
*(780) 422-7199*

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## Feeding corn to livestock

The limited availability of hay has many producers scrambling for winterfeed. The drought experienced this year has also had a huge impact on grain prices, resulting in corn becoming a viable winter-feeding alternative

"Research results from Illinois and Kansas indicate that cow performance on corn feed can be equal or superior to traditional free choice hay and silage rations," says Christoph Weder, beef/forage specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Camrose. "The cost effectiveness of this depends on the price of alternative forage, the price of grain, as well as storage and feeding capabilities available on individual farms."

If corn is valued at $168 per ton delivered, or $.084 per lb, assuming 88 per cent dry matter (DM) content, the value of corn is $.095 per lb of DM According to the National Research Council (NRC), corn is approximately 90 per cent total digestible nutrients (TDN) and 10 per cent crude protein, and it contains 1.02 megacalories (Mcal) of net energy for maintenance (NEm) per pound of DM. Therefore, each Mcal of NEm is worth $.094.

"Availability of grass hay will be limited and, in terms of nutrient content, will be lower in TDN than corn," adds Weder

As a comparison, using a medium quality grass hay that has the following nutrient content: 89 per cent DM, 9.0 per cent crude protein (DM basis), 57 per cent TDN (DM basis) and 0.60 Mcal/lb NEm (DM basis). If this medium quality hay is priced at $150 per ton ($.075 per lb.), the value of the hay is $.084 per lb. of DM; each Mcal of NEm will cost $.14 per lb of DM

"The medium quality hay is a more expensive energy source than corn, given these prices and nutrient values," says Weder. "In other words, in order for the hay energy to be priced the same as the corn energy, the hay would need to be priced at $112 per ton."

When feeding diets high in concentrates to breeding females, greater skill and discipline on the part of the manager is required. Acidosis, bloat and founder are always a risks. These risks can be minimized by the following management practices:

- when starting a new ration using corn or any other grain, gradually increase the amount fed over a two-week step-up period. Likewise, before next spring allow cattle gradual access to pasture so that the rumen has time to adjust
- provide plenty of feeding space to accommodate uniform consumption (at least 30 inches per cow)
- whole or coarsely processed grain is safer than feeding finely processed grain. *Note*: with a minimum 0.5 per cent of body weight (BW) roughage source – corn can be fed whole without processing, with little or no economic loss compared to processed corn
- feeding an ionophore, like Bovatec or Rumensin helps prevent acidosis and bloat
- feeding at the same time every day will reduce the risk of digestive upset
- long stemmed hay should be fed at a minimum dry matter level of 0.5 per cent of body weight, but not to exceed 0.75 per cent. Feeding less hay reduces the cost, but increases the need for greater management intensity. Using 0.5 per cent of body weight, a 1,200 lb. cow would need 6.0 pounds DM of the low quality grass hay described above, or 6.75 pounds on an as-fed basis. As the cattle and the manager adjust to the program, the amount of hay fed could be gradually reduced. Do not exceed the corn in the ration above 1.0 per cent of BW – i.e. 1,200 lb cow – 12 lbs on an 'as-fed' basis

"The idea is to supply a ration in a very small package that is highly concentrated in energy," says Weder. "Consequently, the total pounds consumed per day will be less than what the cattle are accustomed to. The cattle may act hungry for the first few days. Resist the temptation to feed more because they act hungry. Otherwise the advantages of decreased cost and decreased hay use will be negated. If straw is available – it could be fed to alleviate the 'hunger' issue."

An ideal feeding situation would be one where corn, hay and supplement could be placed in the bunk ahead of time. At the appropriate time of day, the cattle would be given access to the feed by simply opening the lot gate. Obviously, large square and round bales that can be fed in flakes or rolled out lend themselves better to a limited feeding system. Hay intake and even distribution among cows will be more difficult to control if fed in feeders.

*Cont'd on page 4*

Corn-based diets require added limestone as a source of calcium to offset the high phosphorus content of the corn. Salt and Vitamin A should also be provided in the feed, or supply a free choice mineral supplement.

The nutrient profile of this corn, hay and supplement diet would be similar to that of a commercial 14 per cent complete feed. The protein supplement could be mixed with the corn, fed at a different time of the day or top dressed over the corn at feeding time.

"Factors such as weather, stage of gestation, milk production and age of animal, as well as hay quality, price and grain source must be considered in each evaluation," notes Weder. "Balancing ration with feed tests will help to keep things more precise."

To make sure cows have enough body condition this fall, early weaning and perhaps additional energy supplementation may be required, which of course would further increase the cost. Limit feeding corn in combination with fair quality alfalfa hay simplifies the program by eliminating the need for added protein and calcium.

If you have questions or require further assistance on this topic, please call the Ag-Info Center at 1-866-882-7677.

*Contact: Ag-Info Centre*
*1-866-882-7677*

## Nitrates in annual forages

If you're pressed for additional grazing or feeds to put in-store for the winter, your annual cereal crops may look like a good alternative. However, the stress on these crops, brought on by drought, may cause serious nitrate problems for your stock.

"Feeding of drought stricken forages can cause nitrate poisoning, which can result in the death of cattle and other ruminant animals," says Rick Corbett, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's dairy nutritionist, Edmonton. "Under normal growing conditions, nitrate taken up by the plant's roots is rapidly converted into protein in the leaves. When the plants are grown under drought conditions, the conversion of nitrates to protein is markedly slowed resulting in accumulation of nitrate in the forage."

The potential nitrate problem is confined to the forage portion of the plant. The grains do not accumulate nitrates.

Further information on this issue is provided in an Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development Fact-Sheet titled, ***Nitrate Poisoning and Feeding Nitrate Feeds to Livestock*** (Agdex# 400/60-1), available by contacting the Alberta Agriculture Publications Office at 1-800-292-5697. The factsheet can also be viewed on-line at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agdex/400/0006001.html>.

If you have questions or require further assistance on this topic, please call the Ag-Info Center at 1-866-882-7677.

*Contact: Ag-Info Centre*
*1-866-882-7677*

## Agriculture Societies scholarship for farm business training

In the fall of 2002, farm managers can look forward to the third annual ***Competitive Advantage Program for Agriculture*** (CAPA) in Olds, a 12-day intensive business course. Approximately 40 participants took the course in the first two years. CAPA helps farmers identify their unique competitive advantage through the development of skills, tools and processes that enable them to develop and implement a strategic business plan for their farm.

"Last year we initiated a scholarship program with local Agriculture Societies," explains Morley Kjargaard, business management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Olds. "Agriculture Societies are encouraged to recognize local area farmers for farm business excellence by offering them a scholarship of up to $1,000 towards CAPA course tuition. As part of their annual grant application, Agriculture Societies can claim the scholarship expense back."

Participation by Agriculture Societies in the scholarship program is voluntary. "We recommend a $1,000 scholarship, but the amount each society awards is discretionary," adds Kjargaard. "Last year, 12 of the 20 course participants were able to take advantage of the scholarship program."

The over 290 Agriculture Societies across the province will be sent information about CAPA and the scholarship program. Interested Agriculture Societies can search for a local candidate, and local farm managers interested in attending are encouraged to contact their local Agriculture Society about the program.

Don and Brenda Shepert of St. Brides, Alberta, received a scholarship from the St. Paul Agriculture Society to attend the CAPA program last year. "The program is a big commitment, both in terms of time and money, and the scholarship was appreciated," says Don Shepert. The couple found the program interesting and very practical in terms of helping to assess their operation and make plans for the farm. "After years of drought and problems on the farm, we felt it was time to take another look at our management. CAPA helped us take a good look at how we were managing, assess the farm and determine what things we needed to change." Shepert says he would recommend the program to other farm managers.

*Cont'd on page 5*

Marcus Borduzak of Legal, Alberta, found out about the scholarship program through Kjargaard, and contacted his local Ag Society. "The Westlock Agriculture Society offered me a scholarship, which made it easier for me to attend," says Borduzak. "CAPA is a great program, and I particularly liked the risk management and financial management sessions, including the Agricultural Business Analyzer (ABA) computer program." Borduzak is currently implementing these concepts in his farm operation.

CAPA is offered by Alberta Agriculture in conjunction with Olds College. This year's program will be held in three parts at Olds College over 12 days, November 18 to 21, December 9 to 12 and January 13 to 16, 2003. Cost of the program is $1,400 for the first participant and $300 for each additional participant from the same farm operation. This cost does not include travel and accommodation

For more information about CAPA, the scholarship program or to receive a registration package, contact Kjargaard at (403) 556-4316 (dial 310-0000 for toll-free access in Alberta)

*Contact* *Morley Kjargaard*
*(403) 556-4316*
*morely.kjargaard@gov.ab.ca*

## 4-H horse enthusiasts province-wide attend Horse Classic

With 114 members from 31 Alberta 4-H light horse clubs, plus 70 volunteer leaders, the 2002 Provincial 4-H Horse Classic at Olds College was very successful. In its eighth year, the program attracted old and new members from across the province.

Horse Classic encourages participants to use their knowledge and experience, and actively develops members' skills by having them complete team and individual activities. Generous support from sponsors allowed the program to offer three industry/project clinics. The six co-sponsors are Alberta Motor Association, Burwash Brand Horse Gear, Gas Alberta Inc, Lammle's Western Wear, Livestock Identification Services, SSG Gloves and United Farmers of Alberta

Registered participants of Horse Classic were automatically entered in a Hippology Contest that tested members' equine knowledge through five phases – knowledge stations, live horse judging, a quiz, identification stations and team problems.

The top four senior members – based on individual hippology points – qualified for the Denver Western 4-H Horse Classic, January 8 to 13, 2003. Winners are Kathleen Leitch of the Humble Ace of Clubs 4-H (Leduc), Victoria Trautman of Coaldale Equestrian 4-H, Danielle Schnurer of the Elk Point Saddle Slickers, and Tyler Daniels of Coaldale Equestrian 4-H. Leitch was the top senior in the Hippology Contest. Top intermediate was Melissa Longshore of the Big Valley Outriders 4-H Club, and top junior was Kelly Dawn Clarahan of the Meadowview Multi 4-H Club. The top senior hippology team consisted of Angie King from the Circle V 4-H Multi Club, Meagan Quaschnick from Berry Creek Light Horse, Danielle Schnurer from the Elk Point Saddle Slickers and Alisha Shoup for the Shadow Riders 4-H. The top junior team included Kelly-Dawn Clarahan from the Meadowview 4-H Multi Club, Brenna Malchow from the Coaldale Equestrian Club and Jaclynn Smith from Easy Riders 4-H Horse.

Taking first place in the team illustrated talk contest for age group category one were Charmayne and Stacey Kading of the Dusty Plains 4-H Multi Club. Category two winners were Amanda Andrews of the Stavely Stampeders 4-H Club and Jessica Wilkinson of the Willow Creek Wranglers 4-H Club. Top individual presenter in the illustrated talk contest was Janet Kelly of Edson 4-H Multi, and runner up was Kelly-Dawn Clarahan of Meadowview 4-H Multi Club.

Horse Bowl team final winners were Tyler Daniels, Brenna Malchow, Chelsea Thiessen and Victoria Trautman of Lethbridge Coaldale Equestrian 4-H.

**Print Marketing class winners divided by age category are**

1 – Angel Sterling of the Hazel Bluff 4-H Multi Club
2 – Jessica Wilkinson of Willow Creek Wranglers 4-H
3 – Valerie Huelsman of the Thundering Hoofbeats Horse 4-H.

**Oral Marketing class winners divided by age category are**

A – Leah Hickman, Easy Riders 4-H Horse
B – Richelle Brau of Coaldale 4-H Equestrian
C – Danny Grover of the Rainbow Riders 4-H Horse Club
D – Jessica Wilkinson of Willow Creek Wranglers 4-H
E – Danielle Schnurer of the Elk Point Saddle Slickers
F – Kathleen Leitch of the Humble Ace of Clubs 4-H

For more information, contact Allison King at (780) 427-4462 or Lee Carothers at (403) 742-2676.

*Contact:* *Allison King* *Lee Carothers*
*(780) 427-4462* *(403) 742-2676*

# New logo for 4-H Canada's 90th anniversary

Canada's longest running rural-based youth development organization will celebrate its 90th anniversary in 2003. To help mark the occasion, the Canadian 4-H Council has developed a commemorative logo.

"This is a very exciting time in 4-H history," says Elizabeth Crouse, president of the Canadian 4-H Council. "A recent national survey of 4-H alumni was overwhelmingly positive. Our alumni attributed much of their success in life and business to the skills they learned in the 4-H program. In 2003 we will celebrate not only our very proud roots, but also the promise of an exciting future as 4-H leads the way in modern youth development."

The 4-H program had its beginnings in Roland, Manitoba in 1913. The program originated for the purposes of improving agriculture, increasing and bettering production and enriching rural life, but now boasts hundreds of different project areas such as computers, crafts, photography, drama, and woodworking. Canada-wide there are more than 32,000 4-H members aged 9 to 21 and 10,500 volunteer leaders operating about 2,500 Clubs. In some provinces, children start 4-H earlier than 9 under the 'Cloverbud' program. To join 4-H or for more information, visit <www.4-h-canada.ca>.

The Canadian 4-H Council is a not-for-profit agency that co-ordinates all national 4-H activities in Canada. Founded in 1933, the Council offers conferences, exchanges, scholarships and international travel opportunities to thousands of 4-H members and leaders across the country.

CANADA

90 Years of 4-H in Canada!

1913 - 2003

The logo may be downloaded under '4-H Graphics' @ www.4-h-canada.ca

*Contact:* *Chris Forrest – Communications Manager*
*Canadian 4-H Council*
*(613) 234-4448*
*<cforrest@4-h-canada.ca>*

# Agri-News Briefs

## Indulging in fruits and vegetables

Salads, fresh fruit desserts and fresh fruit and vegetable snacks are a part of summer and the autumn harvest seasons. Whether purchasing fruits and vegetables at a supermarket, farmers' market, farm stand or harvesting them from a home garden, it's necessary to handle these fresh products with the same care as other perishable foods. Fruits and vegetables can be contaminated with organisms that can cause food borne illness. And, because fruits and vegetables are frequently eaten raw, there is no opportunity for cooking to kill pathogens. Buy or pick only the amount you can use before the fruits and vegetables pass their peak of ripeness. Wash all fruits and vegetables and rewash packaged lettuce and spinach. Western Canadians can obtain a free factsheet packed with tips for safely handling fresh fruits and vegetables by calling the ***Food Safety Info Line*** toll-free 1-800-892-8333. The consumer hotline is answered by professional home economists Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Mountain Time. For more information, contact Jane Carlyle PHEc, coordinator, Food Safety Info Line 1-800-892-8333.

## Historic Ranch wins Environmental Stewardship Award

The winners of the eighth annual National Environmental Stewardship Award for cow-calf producers are the Guichon family of Gerard Guichon Ranch Ltd., Quilchena, B.C. The award was presented on August 8, 2002 at the Canadian Cattlemen's Association (CCA) Semi-Annual Meeting and Convention in Winnipeg, MB. The Environmental Stewardship Award is presented each year to a Canadian cattle producer doing a particularly outstanding job of protecting and enhancing the environment. The original Guichon ranch in the Nicola Valley of southern British Columbia was started in the late 1860s by Lawrence Guichon, over 130 years ago. In 1979, Laurie and Judy Guichon became the fourth generation to manage the farm. The Guichons adopted holistic resource management principles, which the family carried on following Laurie's untimely death in 1999. Management practices used by the family consider the needs of nesting ducks and sharptail grouse, protecting wildlife habitat and keeping pasture in good condition by giving the land a rest period to allow the grasslands proper recovery time. The family also supports efforts to preserve the burrowing owl, a species at risk. The national Environmental Stewardship Award winner is selected from the winners of stewardship awards presented by provincial cattle associations. Other nominees this year were Don and Carol Curtice of Innisfail, Alberta; Murray and Selena McGillivray of Radville, Saskatchewan; Tony and Debbie McMechan of Pierson, Manitoba; and Chris and Carrie Knott of Clarksburg, Ontario. For further information contact Peggy Strankman, CCA manager of environmental affairs at (403) 275-8558 or Cindy McCreath, CCA communications manager at (403) 275-8558.

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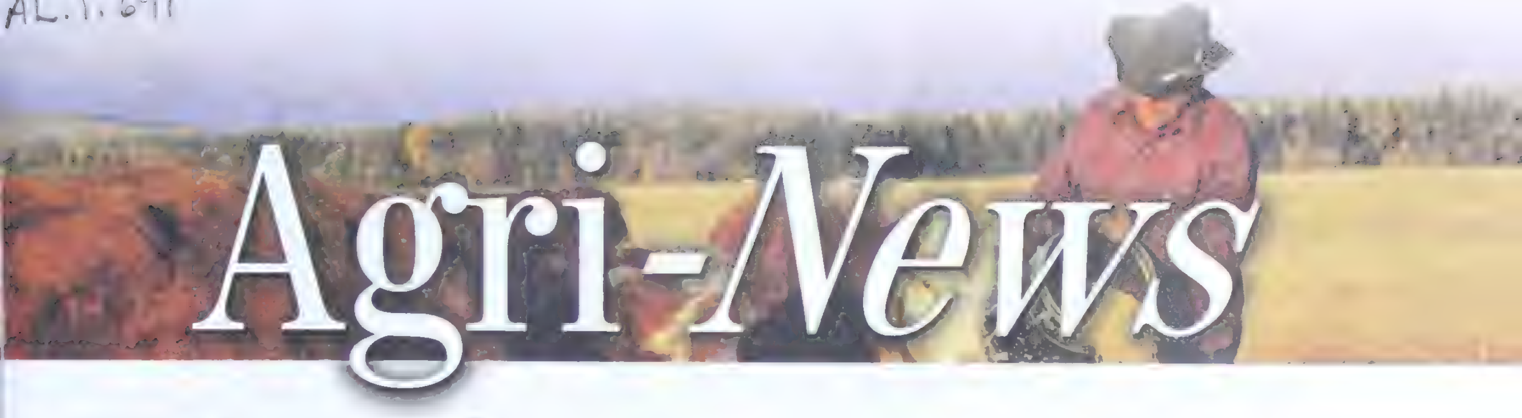

Agri-News

September 9, 2002

## *Alberta* Fusarium graminearum *management plan released*

Alberta producers can be assured of significantly reduced risk of Fusarium head blight affecting the province's cereal crops, thanks to a new provincial policy.

Developed in conjunction with agriculture industry stakeholders, the policy sets out best management practices for feed entering Alberta and a zero-tolerance policy for *Fusarium graminearum* infected seed. *Fusarium graminearum* is what causes the disease Fusarium head blight, resulting in significant losses due to lower grain quality and reduced yield.

Alberta's Agricultural Fieldmen, employed by municipal districts and counties under their Agricultural Service Boards, will enforce the policy under the *Agricultural Pests Act*. This policy is effective October 1, 2002. Non-compliance with this policy can result in *Fusarium graminearum* infected grain being seized and destroyed. All costs associated with control of Fusarium will be passed onto the violator of the policy.

"Our industry has come together to work with government to find appropriate solutions to a complex problem," says Shirley McClellan, Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "Rather than make snap decisions, the province wanted to ensure any policy was equitable and fair to all producers."

McClellan thanks the agricultural producers for being so reasonable. "Our seed industry recognized the need for our livestock producers to import feed from other provinces and countries that may contain *Fusarium graminearum* infected grain. In turn, our livestock industry recognized the million-dollar devastation that could occur if our seed industry is infected with Fusarium head blight."

Currently, Fusarium is a declared pest under the *Agricultural Pests Act* and previously was limited to voluntary compliance.

The Fusarium policy is available in the publication ***Alberta Fusarium graminearum Management Plan*** (Agdex #110/632-3). Copies are available from the Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6 and by calling 1-800-292-5697 (toll free). Copies of the management plan are also available on Alberta Agriculture's web site at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca>.

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## This Week

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To talk to a specialist about Fusarium, call the Ag-Info Centre 1-866-882-7677 (toll free in Alberta).

*Contact:* *Shaffeek Ali*
*Unit Leader*
*Pest Risk Management Unit*
*Crop Diversification Division*
*Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development*
*(780) 422-4909*

Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton

## Managing stressful times

"Alberta's farmers and ranchers need to know there are a wide range of emotional supports available to help them manage through tough times," says Sharon Wilkins, Executive Director, Community Mental Health Services, Alberta Mental Health Board (AMHB). "Alberta farmers are amazingly resilient. They've been dealing with drought for the past four years. But, this year is worse, and some farmers may be reaching a breaking point.

"Anyone dealing with emotional crisis or experiencing stress, anxiety, depression or suicidal thoughts can reach mental health professionals and services any time of the day or night. And, the sooner someone in need contacts these resources, the sooner things will start to get better."

Support starts right in local communities. There are close to 100 AMHB community mental health clinics throughout Alberta and a confidential Help Line available 24 hours a day, seven days per week. All services are free or covered by Alberta Health Care Insurance.

Pam Kollross, an AMHB Mental Health Promoter in Onoway, who recently addressed close to 800 producers in Clyde says, "What I am seeing is neighbours helping neighbours. Part of being a good neighbour is recognizing when someone needs help. Just talking it out can make a difference or, if you think additional help is required, you can suggest they call the Help Line or visit the nearest health clinic."

Kollross also emphasizes there is no shame in seeking help if you need it.

"It is a tremendous sign of strength to step up and ask for help when you are used to doing everything yourself. Farmers are solution-oriented people, which is one of the reasons the current drought can seem so frustrating," says Kollross. "Calling the Help Line is a way of getting solutions, because the more personal resources you have, the greater your ability to manage your way through difficult times."

The AMHB Help Line is 1-877-303-AMHB (2642). The call is toll-free within Alberta.

*Contact:* *AMHB Help Line*
*1-877-303-2642*

## Using annual cereals

"With the drought Alberta is experiencing this year, the livestock industry will rely on annuals for a major portion of the winter feed needs," says Trevor Yurchak, beef specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Athabasca.

When using annuals this summer and winter, keep the following points in mind:

- feeding annuals during the winter requires a very specific mineral package. In addition to a standard 1:1 mineral ration, producers are encouraged to add supplemental calcium, magnesium, and/or potassium. Ask your feed company for details
- feeding rough awned barley greenfeed carries with it the risk of mouth abscesses. The rough awn causes lesions or can accumulate in the cheeks, which can result in an infection in the mouth. Watch for signs of this problem, most visible as a lump on the jaw, and consult your veterinarian for treatment
- cows grazing annuals, especially on lands that had higher fertilizer levels applied in spring, have a potential to develop higher Blood Urea Nitrogen (BUN) levels. These higher BUN levels can reduce conception rates for a period of time after the cows begin to graze these annuals. Providing a source of effective fiber at turnout, until the cows adjust to the new feed, will help minimize this issue
- annuals have the potential to be high in nitrates during a drought year. Nitrate risk increases on land that had manure or high levels of fertilizer applied. A feed test after the feed is harvested will determine nitrate levels. If the levels are too high, the feed can be blended with a low nitrate feed to make the ration safe. If you're planning to graze annuals, feed test prior to turn out. Once again, consult your nutritionist
- harvesting annuals for silage requires an adequate level of sugars for the ensiling process to occur. Proper ensiling is very difficult to ensure if the crop is over mature or over dry. Plan on harvesting annuals for silage while they are still green and while the stand moisture is above 50 per cent

All of the nutrition topics addressed in this list of things to remember can be better understood with the use of ***CowBytes***.

***Cowbytes*** is a ration balancing software program designed by Alberta Agriculture to meet the needs of the beef industry. It is very user friendly, cost effective and will help producers or consultants balance their own rations and understand proper beef nutrition. It is available through Alberta Agriculture for $150 plus GST and can be ordered by calling (780) 427-4309. For toll free access in Alberta, dial 310-0000 first.

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More details on ***Cowbytes*** and a demo version are available on Alberta Agriculture's web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/ruraldev/homestdy/cowbytes.html>.

If you have any questions, or require further assistance on this topic, please call the Alberta Ag-Info Centre at 1-866-882-7677.

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| *Contact:* | *Alberta Ag Info Centre*<br>*1-866-882-7677* | *Trevor Yurchak*<br>*(780) 675-8219* |

## New look for Hort Congress

Changes are being made to the Horticultural Congress this year. "In previous years, the emphasis was aimed at the technical aspect of running a horticultural business," says Shirley Alton, Congress coordinator. "While a few technical sessions will still be offered this year, the main theme at Congress focuses on business management. As business management is common to everyone, the organizing committee have hired two keynote speakers who will inspire, entertain and provide attendees with plenty of information about how to be a better business manager, operator, and person."

Kit Grant is one of the keynote speakers and will be addressing the subject *The Challenge of Change*. This presentation is based on the premise that life's only constant factor is change It impacts how we perform both personally and professionally. Getting out of one's comfort zone helps business managers recognize that the benefits of change can be very difficult. Learn how to deal effectively with change while accepting the fact that individuals control their response.

Grant will also make a presentation titled *So Much To Do....So Little Time*. During this presentation, he will share techniques for answering the call of improved quality and better productivity. Getting things done with fewer people and limited resources requires being flexible and having a penchant for juggling priorities. Learn some tools for taking control of yourself and your reality.

Lori Colborne is the second keynote speaker on the Congress agenda. She will make a presentation dealing with *Marketing on a Limited Budget*. When you can't afford to advertise, why not try marketing! Too many business people confuse advertising with marketing. Marketing is everything you do that touches your customer and business, and if it's not done properly, it can often mean the difference between success and failure. This high energy, and entertaining seminar, will provide dozens of low-cost marketing ideas that can be used immediately. Learn how to create a big business illusion, use success through customer service, market with attitude and gratitude and find the money to market.

The 2002 Hort Congress program and registration information will be available on the internet by mid-September, 2002. The web address of this new site is <www.albertahortcongress.com>.

Information is also available by calling (780) 415-2324 and leaving your name and address to be added to the Congress mailing list.

*Contact:* *Shirley Alton*
*(780) 415-2324*

## Significant fine to help improve fisheries and fish habitats

Action taken as a result of unlicensed rearing of Arctic char and unauthorized stocking in private fish ponds in southern Alberta cost a commercial trout farm operator nearly $40,000. Most of that money will go to a fund to enhance the fishery and fish habitat of the Bow and Elbow river systems.

About 15,000 Arctic char were found by staff of Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD)to be present in Allen's Trout Farm in July 2001. The farm operator was not licensed to have that species of fish in the facility adjacent the Elbow River. Arctic char were found mixed in with rainbow trout in ponds on the site, and several escaped Arctic char were also found in a creek immediately below the facility. Further investigation showed that numerous licensed and unlicensed fish ponds had been previously stocked with fish from that farm, and some of those ponds occurred in areas where Arctic char were also not permitted. If Arctic char should escape from stocked ponds, they could negatively affect wild bull trout populations.

With the assistance of the landowners, staff of Alberta Sustainable Resource Development and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development worked to remove stocked fish from those ponds identified as having a high risk that the Arctic char might escape. Follow-up action included laying of a number of charges against Allen's Trout Farm.

In total, 31 charges were laid, which led to 24 convictions after the owner pled guilty to the charges. Fines amounting to $12,500 were levied on the charges. In addition, the trout farm owner was required to pay $25,000 to the Alberta Conservation Association. The association funds work on fishery and fish habitat enhancement throughout the province. These funds may be used on the Elbow and Bow rivers to ensure that all Arctic char have been captured and removed from the wild, or for fishery or habitat enhancement.

Landowners who wish to develop private fish ponds should be aware that they must possess a current recreational fish culture licence from Alberta Agriculture before any fish can be stocked into their ponds. Regulations that apply to fish farming and pond development in an area should be determined before any site development is undertaken. Licence applications for

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fish farming are available online at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/livestock/aquaculture/2002rec_app.html> or by contacting the Aquaculture Licencing Co-ordinator, toll free 310-0000, then dial (403) 381-5164.

Education of Albertans about effective conservation measures is part of ASRD's initiative on Improving Alberta's Fisheries. Alberta Agriculture works closely with ASRD and supports the use of environmentally sound management practices on fish farms.

*Contact:* *Dave Ealey*
*Communications*
*Alberta Sustainable Resource Development*
*(780) 427-8636, Edmonton*

*David Christiansen*
*Regional Fisheries Biologist*
*Fish and Wildlife Division*
*Alberta Sustainable Resource Development*
*(403) 845-8269, Rocky Mountain House*

*Jack Stewart*
*Licensing Coordinator*
*Aquaculture Section*
*Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development*
*(403) 381-5164, Lethbridge*

## The Alberta Purple Loosestrife Eradication program enhances bio-diversity in Alberta wetlands

Purple loosestrife, *Lythrum salicaria* was once classified as a beautiful garden ornamental. It is now known as an invasive weed that can destroy wetlands by out-competing native vegetation, creating a dense monoculture and threatening the natural balance and bio-diversity wherever it grows. Wildlife that depend on the native plants for food and shelter are forced to new areas.

"Garden varieties of Lythrum were once believed to be sterile," says Janet Feddes-Calpas integrated pest management technologist, with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Research has proven that under the right conditions, these plants can cross-pollinate with escaped plants and produce viable seeds, and may even produce seeds themselves.

The majority of infestations in Alberta are located down stream from urban centers, indicating seeds or cuttings from garden plantings of purple loosestrife may have escaped into storm sewer outlets and spread into wetlands via rivers and streams. For this reason *Lythrum salicaria* is listed as a noxious weed under the Alberta's *Weed Control Act*. Under this Act all land owners are required to remove purple loosestrife from their gardens.

"Purple loosestrife can be identified by its noticeable four-sided stem and its tall spike of tightly clustered pink-purple flowers that bloom from mid-July through to September," says Feddes-Calpas. "Its leaves are smooth, tongue-like and opposing on the stalk. This weed is very prolific, producing 2.5 million seeds a year per plant."

Purple loosestrife numbers in Alberta have declined significantly since the initiation of the Alberta Purple Loosestrife Eradication Program in 1994. Alberta has been very successful in the eradication of 105 locations and a reduction of plants in the remaining 89 active locations. This reduction is accredited to the dedication and hard work of volunteers, landowners, Ag Fieldman and weed inspectors.

Each year, as a result of the public awareness campaigns and riparian habitat surveys, new locations have been identified. Although new sites are being discovered each year, most of these are small infestations that can be eradicated quickly. In 2001, a total of nine new locations were found. Areas with high densities of purple loosestrife include some regions around Edmonton and Fort McLeod. Areas around Calgary, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat have light to moderate infestation levels. All known infestations are re-inspected annually, and action is taken in a timely manner. The inventory clearly shows that the program is effective.

"Public involvement has been a key contributor to the success of the program," adds Feddes-Calpas. "Every year, several infestation reports are received from conscientious individuals. Many volunteers have contributed countless man-hours to the physical removal of this weed. Through dedication and quick action, most of Alberta's infestations are small compared with other provinces, rarely involving more than 50 plants."

To report a possible infestation sighting, call (780) 422-7199, toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first. For more information on purple loosestrife check out Alberta Agriculture's web site at: <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/navigation/pests/weeds/index.html>.

*Contact:* *Janet Feddes-Calpas*
*(780) 422-7199*

## Once-in-a-lifetime experience shared by 4-H members

Nearly 120 4-H members participated in an unending stream of games and group work from July 23 to 28 at Club Week 2002. Delegates quickly developed an atmosphere of friendliness, openness and trust that allowed them to share ideas and listen to the opinions of others.

Sponsored by Agricore United, Agrium, Alberta 4-H Program Trust, Alberta Motor Association, Lammle's Western Wear and Tack, Meyers Norris Penny, Olds College and UFA, the Club Week program was a chance for young people from across the province to meet and discuss issues of concern. Topics included human rights, values, nationalism, family, friends and communication. By addressing these issues, participants gained a greater sense of self-confidence and respect for both themselves and others. Marcel Cloutier, an eight-year member of the Plamondon 4-H Multi Club states, "Though it's hard to pick a favorite part of the program, group discussions definitely broadened my views of the issues we face. We talked about everything from drinking and driving, to the importance of values and goals."

Guest speakers who have faced various challenges spoke to the delegates in the Overcoming Adversity session. The speakers included a visually impaired woman, a lower level quadriplegic, an amputee, refugees and a burn victim. "All of the speakers were very inspirational. Their stories made me realize how precious my life really is and how grateful I am to be healthy. They also made me aware of how important it is to always have a positive attitude," says Heather Standing, a member of the Lone Butte 4-H Beef Club and Hanna Prairie Riders 4-H.

Other highlights of the week included the Masquerade Dance, Fringe Festival, Talent Show, and Mini-Olympics. The Mini-Olympics encouraged group members to work as a team to push their limits. Chelsey Thiessen, a long time 4-H member comments, "It was amazing to see what we could accomplish as a group. When we focused our efforts to the overall goal, we achieved much more than we would have individually."

The Club Week philosophy perfectly resembles all that was accomplished throughout the week: "Club Week is many things wrapped into one. It is time designed to look inside one's self, and discover strengths while growing and developing as a person. Through honest discussion and warm exchanges, small groups grow into a relationship of people accepting and trusting each other. Friendships, laughter and good feelings thrive throughout the week."

For more information about 4-H, visit the website at <www.4h.ab.ca> or contact the Provincial 4-H Office at (780) 422-4H4H

*Contact* *Provincial 4-H Office*
*(780) 422-4444*

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# Agri-News Briefs

## Recognizing the symptoms of farm stress

There are five very clear telltale physical factors that indicate overwhelming stress:

- changes in appetite
- changes in sleep patterns
- feeling hopeless, helpless or worthless
- poor energy and concentration
- thoughts of suicide

Alberta farmers experiencing high levels of stress can help alleviate some of the stress by:

- doing something you enjoy
- talking to your spouse and friends
- getting away from home and take a walk
- talking to your minister, pastor or priest
- keeping busy. Sitting around can cause you to dwell on things you can't change
- getting enough sleep, being exhausted doesn't help
- eating right because fighting stress takes energy
- offering to help a neighbour and letting them help you
- talking to your doctor about the symptoms you have.

For more information or for help, call the Alberta Mental Health Board Help Line toll free at 1-877-303-2642.

## Autumn – canning time

Canning time is always anticipated by those who indulge in this food preservation science. Jane Carlyle, coordinator of the Food Safety Info Line, recounts that staff at the Food Safety Info Line handle many calls during the preserving season. Questions often include concerns about whether or not to heat process jams, jellies and pickles, whether or not tomatoes should be canned using acid or non-acid techniques, is garlic which has turned blue in pickles safe and why is there fermentation. "Jam and jelly making, pickling and canning are a science, not a craft," says Carlyle. "Recipes must be reliable and have up-to-date directions including heat processing after the food is put in the jar. Proper equipment and techniques must be used." Jars of correctly home preserved fruits and vegetables may be safely stored for a year in a cool, dark and dry place. Jars of incorrectly preserved food will lose quality and, even worse, can cause potentially deadly food borne illness. Call the Food Safety Info Line at 1-800-892-8333 before you start to the work of preserving. The staff of Professional Home Economists can discuss callers' preserving practices and clarify heat processing times, plus answer a broad range of questions including techniques for freezing or blanching times for vegetables. The consumer hotline is answered Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Mountain Time). For more information, contact Carlyle toll free at 1-800-892-8333.

## "Hey Buddy...can you spare a bale or two?"

Sheep and goat producers are hurting as much as other livestock producers due to feed shortages and the spiraling costs of hay and grain. Selling the breeding flock is not much of an option when so many others in the business are facing the same shortages. The few auction markets that hold regular sheep and goats sales have seen the numbers triple, while breeding animal prices have sunk to their lowest ever. Many good quality ewes have sold for as low as $10 per head – seldom do they bring more than $25. If this dispersal movement continues at the current rate only about half the estimated 140,000 ewes will remain to produce next year's lamb crop. The immediate need is for a dependable winter feed supply.

A group of concerned producers have banded together in an effort to find affordable feed supplies and prevent a sell-off. An internet feed site has been created at <www.farm-online.com/feedline>. It is hoped that the site will generate an awareness of the sheep and goat producers' plight and will help locate farmers with feed at a reasonable prices that are willing to come to the rescue. "Hey Buddy…can you spare a bale or two" banners are already being seen in a few communities. Anyone can list their "need" or make a "feed offer" on this web site, or they can phone Allona MacVicor at 780-675-3667, Colinton, to be placed on the list.

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Agri-News

September 16, 2002

## Gaining a competitive advantage for farm or ranch agri-business

For farmers, ranchers and all agri-businesses, the stakes in agriculture have risen another level this year. With drought conditions facing many parts of the province, poor crops and lack of feed, management issues just got more complicated.

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and Olds College are offering the third annual Competitive Advantage Program for Agriculture (CAPA) this fall and winter, which is a comprehensive, advanced management program with a strong emphasis on outcomes and practical application. "The basis of the whole CAPA program is to provide some of the skills to do whole farm strategic planning," explains Dann Mattson, Agricultural Management Specialist in Olds. Participants will develop a competitive advantage for their operation that will help them survive and prosper

"CAPA provides participants with the opportunity to remove themselves from their operation so they are far enough away from the forest so they can see the trees," says Mattson. "They are able to sit back and look objectively at their operation, gain some skills to analyze some of the decisions they are facing, and work through a more analytical decision-making process."

This 12-day intensive business course focuses on skills, tools and processes in key areas including marketing, financial and human resource management and strategic planning.

"We also try to keep the program focused on current conditions," explains Mattson. "Participants this year will have the opportunity to be involved in the one-day ***Thinking About Strategies*** speaking series being offered. This series focuses on managing through drought this year. One of the keynote speakers is Dr. David Pratt of Ranch Management Consultants from Fairfield, California, who is noted for his Ranching for Profit schools. He has numerous clients in Nebraska and Wyoming and has had extensive experience with helping people manage through drought. The other keynote is Dr. Tim Ball, a climatologist and professional speaker from Victoria, B.C. who has written extensively in Country Guide.

The program is open to all types of agriculture enterprises, and organizers feel the diversity of the group enhances the value of the program to participants. "We provide participants with

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management skills and tools that are very much appropriate for various types of enterprises," explains Mattson. "During the program, participants have the opportunity to work on case studies in groups, and the diversity often strengthens their strategic management decision-making. Past participants have also commented that the vast array of experiences participants bring creates an informal sounding board making it easy to ask questions and seek out solutions."

CAPA is offered by Alberta Agriculture in conjunction with Olds College, and will be held over 12 days through November 18 to 21, December 9 to 12 and January 13 to 16 at Olds College. The cost of the program is $1,400 for the first participant and $300 for each additional participant from the same farm operation. Travel and accommodation are not included in the registration fee. Register now to reserve your place in this important agriculture program.

For more information about CAPA, the scholarship program or to get a registration package, contact Morley Kjargaard, business management specialist with Alberta Agriculture at (403) 556-4316 (dial 310-0000 for toll-free access).

*Contact: Morley Kjargaard*
*(403) 556-4316*
*email: morely.kjargaard@gov.ab.ca*

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## Basic design of a lease agreement for custom feeding cows

Drought and its impact on grass production and feed availability could result in producers having to make decisions on where to feed cattle. When the decision includes custom feeding cows there are issues that the producer and the landlord will need to consider.

### *Initial matters*

- date of the agreement
- who are the parties in the agreement
- prepare a statement that sets out the intent of the agreement that both parties agree to (e.g. This agreement is entered into for the housing, feeding and caring of cattle as a result of a drought situation faced by the owner of the cattle)

"It's important to include a description of the cattle being housed in the Agreement," says Graham Gilchrist, P.Ag., business risk management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Vegreville. "This may be outlined on a separate schedule detailing the number of animals, type of animals, tag numbers, brands, and condition score for each animal."

Here are some of the questions that need to be addressed in an agreement:

**What is the range on the number of animals that will be housed?** – this would set the minimum and the maximum number of animals in this agreement

**What is the requirement for branding, ear tagging and other forms of identification required in the location for purposes of identifying the cattle in question?** – if the cattle owner is looking just for "lodging" then all appropriate forms of identification would be the responsibility of the owner unless otherwise agreed to

**What is the location of the cattle?** – the agreement should outline the location where the cattle will be housed. The agreement should also outline the right of the owner to inspect his cattle and their condition.

### *Breeding of the females*

- will the females be bred while being housed?
- who provides the bulls?
- what will be the exposure period?
- what warranties come with the bull if the landlord provides the bull?
- who will pay for the cost involved?

"This section would not be needed if the cattle arrive after the breeding period," says Gilchrist. "Should it be agreed that the landlord has the responsibility for this service, then the fee would take into account bull depreciation, labor and health costs directly associated with the bulls being used."

### *Herd health*

- what constitutes a herd health program?
- who pays for the costs?

"Agreement will need to be reached on what condition score the cattle will be in when the agreement is fulfilled," adds Gilchrist. "Associated feed costs to achieve a desired score should be included within the agreement."

### *Veterinarian services*

- what latitude will the landlord be given to engage the services of a Vet?
- who then covers the cost of service?
- who then pays for the treatment?

Unless otherwise agreed to, the landlord would be given the latitude to call the appropriate resources and the owner will pay the costs.

### *Feed, water, pasture and care*

"Feed, water, forage and pasture represent a good majority of the costs in this agreement; therefore, this agreement will need to determine the cost for the direct inputs into the cattle and a

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return to the landlord for the use of the facilities," explains Gilchrist. "Use the herd health section as a guide to build the feeding program."

Since the cattle owner is "lodging" the cattle, the cost of replacing feed, pasture, water and care is the landlord's. Should the landlord not be able to provide these items, the cost to find suitable replacement will be the responsibility of the landlord.

### *Culls and replacements*

There would not be a clause here unless management of the cattle was transferred to long-term.

### *Death loss, strays, and insurance*

The owner of the animals assumes the death loss unless otherwise agreed to. There are additional considerations that could be included in the agreement, such as:

- should the landlord carry insurance to cover his risks as a landlord?
- should the landlord require the cattle owner to carry mortality insurance?
- should an animal stray and is killed, damaged or put down by a vet or officer of the law, does the owner assumes the loss unless otherwise is agreed to?

### *Disputes and arbitration*

"In the case of a dispute, disagreement or issue not addressed in the agreement, and the parties can not agree on an outcome suitable to both parties, the agreement needs a mechanism to resolve the issue," advises Gilchrist.

- should the landlord ask his neighbor to be involved?
- should the cattle owner ask his neighbor to be involved?
- should the two named neighbors chose a third person and then hear and decide the case?
- does the looser pay all costs?
- do the landlord and the cattle owner agree to live with the decision?
- do the landlord and cattle owner agree not to go to the court to overturn the three-neighbor decision?

### *Terms, termination and assignment of this agreement*

"It is assumed that both parties trust each other or the agreement would not be entered into in the first place," says Gilchrist. "Normally the "lodging" will be for a period of time and the agreement would outline specific conditions that would allow the landlord to leave the lease early, and conditions that would allow the cattle owner to leave the lease early, also. Subcontracting the care and feeding of the animals should also be addressed in the agreement. There should also be the option for extending the agreement and what changes to the agreement would need to be made at that time."

### *Death of a party to the agreement*

The agreement should address whether or not the death of the landlord or the cattle owner constitutes an immediate termination of the "lodging".

### *Payment and security*

- how will the payment for the "lodging" be made? When and in what form?
- should the owner of the cattle provide a non-revocable letter of credit to secure payment?
- should the cattle owner not pay, what next? Do the cattle become collateral in the event of nonpayment?
- what happens if a cheque is returned NSF?

### *Legal stuff*

Which Provincial or State laws (unless both parties are residing in Alberta) govern this agreement? This is important when cattle are housed outside Alberta.

Both parties should consult with legal council prior to entering into any legal or contractual agreement.

"These are just a few of the issues involved with setting up a custom boarding arrangement for cattle," says Gilchrist. "The issues range from covering basic production practices to more complex business considerations. The key point is that the producer and the landlord share a common set of expectations. Should the two parties move from just a lodging agreement into an agreement that has some degree of shared ownership, a new set of issues would need to be outlined and incorporated into the agreement."

If you have questions or require further assistance on this topic, please call the Ag-Info Center at 1-866-882-7677.

| *Contact:* | *Graham Gilchrist, P.Ag.* | *Ag-Info Centre* |
|---|---|---|
| | *(780) 632-5417* | *1-866-882-7677* |

## Holding harvested trees for commercial use

In commercial tree nurseries, trees are harvested during a very short window of time. The spring digging season is from when the soil has thawed enough to allow a tree spade to work and when the buds break on the trees. During the spring digging season it is necessary to harvest all the trees that will be sold and shipped over the summer planting/landscaping season. There is a second window of opportunity to dig trees, in the fall after trees have set their terminal buds and begun dormancy.

"There are unique challenges to holding harvested trees over the often very hot and dry Alberta summer," says Dr. Christine Murray, branch head at Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South (CDC South),

*Cont'd on page 4*

Brooks. "A number of different holding methods are being evaluated in a new research project established at CDC South in spring 2002. The Landscape Alberta Nursery Trades Association (LANTA) Growers Commodity Group have been very interested and involved in the project and funded it with both cash and in-kind contributions."

The objective of any holding system is to have a tree maintain its landscape quality and continue to grow new branches and roots while being held through the season. Also, all new root development must be contained in the root ball and not grow out into the surrounding soil. Factors being evaluated through the project treatments include the amount of new lateral growth of the branches and the amount of new root development.

As each tree is dug by a tree spade in the nursery, the rootball is wrapped in burlap and set in a wire basket to provide support. When trees are dug they suffer a significant transplant shock as a large portion of their root system, especially the fine roots and root hairs which extend from the base of the tree to a distance two to four times its height, cannot be harvested as part of the root ball. While trees are being held they begin to grow and develop new roots to replace the roots that were lost at digging. As new roots develop it is very important they are contained in the rootball and do not grow into the surrounding soil; otherwise when the tree is moved from the holding area to its final transplanting location it can suffer a second major shock when these newly developed roots are severed or broken. Species such as poplar and elm have very vigorously growing root systems, often with new roots developing outside the rootball.

"In the research project, six different systems for holding harvested trees are being evaluated. These specific systems were chosen for the project based on observations of systems and discussions with growers," adds Murray. "Many nurseries have developed systems that are effective in their operation. This project will allow scientific comparison of the different holding systems."

Several important considerations for holding trees through the shipping season influenced the treatments that were included; did the system require staking (tree damage from wind in holding areas can decrease the value of trees while staking is time consuming and expensive); the impact of mulch or no mulch in moisture retention in the rootball, and the effectiveness of barriers to root development outside the rootball.

Data will be collected on the root and top growth in the fall of 2002 to evaluate the effectiveness of each system for holding the trees through the summer. Data will also be collected in the spring of 2003 to evaluate the success of overwintered trees in each holding system. This data will be shared with LANTA members and will be published in ***Agri-News***.

*Contact: Dr. Christine Murray*
*(403) 362-1313*

## Environmental Farm Plan in the works

Alberta's Environmental Farm Plan (EFP), a non-profit company initiated by industry to identify environmental opportunities and risks on the province's farms and ranches, will be ready to launch its programs by the end of November 2002.

Alberta's EFP is a completely voluntary, self-assessment program, based in part on successful EFP programs in Ontario and Atlantic Canada. Using a detailed manual and the help of specially trained facilitators and technical advisors, agricultural producers can use EFP to check the environmental health of their operations and arrive at practical, workable actions that promote sustainability.

"The Alberta EFP program arose from the recognition that a comprehensive approach to environmental sustainability in the agricultural industry was needed and that it had to be farm-side driven," says John Kolk, a Picture Butte producer and chairman of the AESA Council. "The program has developed as a real partnership of the industry and government. When producers have ownership of a program, they often adopt the management practices that will work for their operations more readily. Alberta's EFP will give producers the tools they need to evaluate their own situations and make their own decisions on changes that makes sense for their farm operations.

"As producers become better informed about the economic and environmental advantages of sustainable practices, they'll be less resistant to change. Farmers who have been through the EFP program will ask better questions of the experts. In turn, the experts will be better able to direct them to the appropriate resources and to the people who have the information they need."

The province's Cows and Fish program is an excellent example of how successful a partnership between industry and government can be. Producers saw the economic benefits of that program, as well as the environmental differences it made, and have been quick to adopt the management practices suggested.

"Producers want to do the right thing," Kolk says, "but they also need to have their operations make economic sense. Those who go through the EFP program will come to see environmental planning not as a threat, but as positive actions with real advantages."

*Cont'd on page 5*

"Producers who get EFP training will also be more willing to attend field courses and other government programs, because they'll have a better understanding of the benefits these programs offer," says Dale Chrapko, conservation coordinator with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and the liaison between the government and the EFP program. "In turn, this will lead to improvements in environmentally sustainable farm practices and in the industry's ability to market green products."

EFP program director Therese Tompkins adds that producers will also become more pro-active – acting to prevent environmental damage before it starts, rather than just responding to emergency situations. "We've also planned for regular communications between EFP clients, technical advisors and the program itself. A mechanism is in place to get continual input from government staff and industry people. Producer feedback and expert input is a key tenet of the program."

*Contact:* *Dale Chrapko* *Therese Tompkins*
*(780) 632-5452* *1-866-844-2337*

## National contest to celebrate 90 years of 4-H

The Canadian 4-H Council is calling on all current and former 4-H members to get creative to help celebrate 90 years of 4-H in Canada. The ***90 Years of 4-H in Canada Art*** contest is open to all current and former 4-H members in the following categories: Junior (ages 5-9); Intermediate (ages 10-15); Senior (ages 16-21); Alumni (ages 22 and up). The top prize in each category is $100 cash. Entries may be submitted in any medium and must be received by Canadian 4-H Council no later than December 20, 2002.

"We can't think of a more exciting way to celebrate our 90th anniversary than to ask our members and alumni to show the world through art how much the 4-H program has meant to them," says Elizabeth Crouse, president of the Canadian 4-H Council. "This contest will not only showcase the rich talent among 4-H members, but I think it will also highlight the many aspects of the program that the general public may or may not be familiar with."

The historical roots of the Canadian 4-H program are solidly grounded in rural Canada, with its beginnings in Roland, Manitoba, in 1913. While the program originated for the purposes of improving agriculture, increasing and bettering production and enriching rural life for youth, it has evolved over the years to meet the needs of modern young people. Today's 4-H program boasts hundreds of different projects in varied subjects such as computers, livestock, photography, drama, woodworking, crafts and so much more. In a recent national survey, former 4-H members overwhelmingly credited the 4-H program for their success in career and personal life.

The Canadian 4-H Council is a not-for-profit agency that co-ordinates all national 4-H activities in Canada. Founded in 1933, the Council offers conferences, exchanges, scholarships and international travel opportunities to thousands of 4-H members and leaders across the country.

*Contact:* *Chris Forrest*
*Communications Manager*
*Canadian 4-H Council*
*(613) 234-4448 or cforrest@4-h-canada.ca*

An information flyer on the contest is available at <www.4-h-canada.ca> under *What's New*.

## People Developing People

Over 200 4-H members attended three People Developing People (PDP) camps in July and August at the Alberta 4-H Centre, located west of Wetaskiwin. PDP is a program designed to enhance intermediate 4-H member's communication skills, encourage them to work together towards a common goal and engage in sessions to help them be viable contributing members of their communities

"T.E.A.M.S. (Together Everyone Achieves Much Success) was the main theme behind this year's PDP camps. Cooperation was promoted, as it is important for delegates to realize the power of working in a group," says Eran Hawkwood, Provincial 4-H summer staff. "As delegates worked throughout the week creating solutions to various challenges, they inadvertently improved their leadership and decision-making skills. The ability to compromise their diverse opinions encourages maturity and respect within each member."

Participants of PDP #1 and #2 took part in an environmental forum where they had to discuss a proposal to assemble an intensive poultry operation on a fictional piece of land called the "4-H Ranch". In small groups, delegates had to play the role of a nearby town council that had to either approve or reject the operations proposal. Each group's decision had to be supported by their reasons.

PDP #3 was PDP Plus. Designed for returning PDP delegates, this camp allowed members to reconnect with old friends while having fun and learning new knowledge," comments Lanny Anderson, 4-H summer staff. "Members participated in unique challenges throughout the week that allowed them to talk about issues that teens face. Topics such as peer pressure, drinking, budgeting, and planning ahead were discussed. A main part of PDP Plus was the social forum that was based on a school council planning an activity that would involve all student groups in the school. Delegates used information learned throughout the week and teamwork skills to plan a successful activity."

*Cont'd on page 6*

In addition to the forums and discussion sessions, members also participated in traditional camp events such as water front activities, campfires, games galore and an extreme adventure. "PDP was an incredible experience. Activities throughout the week helped me to recognize my strengths and increased my awareness of issues facing people my age," says Lisa Hansen, a member of the Viking 4-H Beef Club and a participant of PDP #2.

Thank you to PDP sponsors: Agricore United, Lammle's Western Wear and Tack, Meyers Norris Penny, Olds College, Peavey Mart and Weyerhaeuser for their continued dedication. Their contributions helped make this program a success.

For more information about 4-H, visit the web site at <www.4h.ab.ca> or contact the Provincial 4-H Office at (780) 422-4H4H.

*Contact: Alberta 4-H Office*
*(780) 422-4444*

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# Agri-News Briefs

## Keeping Canada Competitive

The 2003 Banff Pork Seminar is being held on January 14 to 17, 2003. The theme of this seminar is ***Keeping Canada Competitive***. The agenda includes three plenary sessions: Staying Competitive - strategies used by pork producers around the world; Prospering Under Pressure – dealing with public perceptions of pork production; and, Preparing for the Future – price predictions, U.S. Farm Bill, trade opportunities outside of North America. In addition to these plenary sessions, 12 breakout sessions are planned:

- Advances in Genetic Technology
- Antimicrobials: Can we continue using them?
- Everything Old is New Again – Sow Housing
- Nursery Management
- Financing Options & Opportunities
- Mining your Data to Make Money
- Solving Production Limiting Problems
- Innovative Waste Management
- Getting my Barn Built, Update on Regulations
- Sow & Gilt Management
- Current Hot Issue in Pork Industry (TBA)
- Animal Welfare – Concerns & Solutions

For more information, contact the Banff Pork Seminar 2003 at (780) 492-3651, fax (780) 492-5771, or e-mail <bps@afns.ualberta.ca>. The web site address for the Banff Pork Seminar is <www.banffpork.ca>.

## Bayer CropScience new headquarters in Calgary

Bayer CropScience Canada opened a new office in Calgary on September 6, 2002. Forty of the 200 Canadian Bayer CropScience employees are now working out of the new office and have transferred to Calgary from France, Germany, the U.S., Regina and Toronto. Bayer CropScience focuses on researching, developing and marketing innovative solutions that meet the needs of today's growers. Emphasis is placed on healthy crops, increased yields, improved crop and food quality and on constantly striving to meet the needs of the environment. "Bayer CropScience is taking a serious role in helping growers feed not only Canada's population, but people around the world," said Bill Buckner, president of Bayer CropScience Canada at the grand opening of the new headquarters. "We're making a commitment to being a leading member of Canada's agricultural industry." For more information, contact Derrick Rozdeba at (403) 723-7432, Calgary, or e-mail <derrick.rozdeba@bayercropscience.com>. Information is also available on the Bayer web site at <www.bayercropscience.ca>.

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# Agri-News

September 23, 2002

## Enforcing Alberta's CFO regulations

Provincial standards for siting new and expanding confined feeding operations (CFO) and province-wide environmental standards for all livestock production came into effect on January 1, 2002 when the amended *Agricultural Operation Practices Act* became effective. A new process for handling nuisance complaints was also introduced at that time.

These rules, and the power to enforce them, are contained within the amended *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*. It lays a foundation for long-term environmental, social and economic sustainability for the province's livestock sector. It also clearly outlines the specific environmental responsibilities of producers.

"The regulations are new and so is the enforcement process, so inevitably questions will arise," says Louise Starling, head of Environmental Practices and Livestock Welfare, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Red Deer. "It's important producers understand their new responsibilities under the Act."

Under the Act, the Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) is responsible for granting permits to new and expanding CFOs. It is also responsible for monitoring and enforcing compliance with province-wide environmental standards and permit conditions in NRCB approvals and existing municipal permits. The NRCB is an independent, quasi-judicial body reporting to the Minister of Alberta Sustainable Resource Development.

The enforcement process through the NRCB combines a focus on education and voluntary compliance with a series of escalating consequences for non-compliance.

"In addition to the regulations, producers with existing livestock operations must abide by the terms and conditions set out in any development permits issued by a municipality," says Alex Bolton, head of Compliance and Monitoring, NRCB. "If a development permit issued in 1995 prohibits an operation from winter spreading manure, then there's still no winter spreading allowed for that operation, even though the Act does allow it under certain conditions and despite the fact a neighbour down the road may be allowed to winter spread."

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## This Week

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**Internet site: www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agrinews Editor e-mail: agrinews@gov.ab.ca**

Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The Act recognizes that agricultural operations will generate dust, noise and odour. However, there was a process created to allow the delivery of enforcement orders should these issues become an inappropriate disturbance.

Enforcement orders are issued when a person has contravened the terms and conditions of the Act, an approval, registration or authorization, or when that contravention creates a risk to the environment or an inappropriate disturbance. Among other things, enforcement orders can be issued to refer the matter to the Minister for mediation, direct the person to cease the actions that are described in the enforcement order, or specify which actions must be taken in order to achieve compliance with the Act.

The philosophy behind the inspection and enforcement process is that it will be complaint-driven and focused on education and voluntary compliance. Where necessary, enforcement actions will be made in a timely, effective and situation-appropriate manner.

The NRCB inspects and investigates livestock operations based on complaints from neighbours and the public, as well as referrals from other agencies, such as municipalities, regional health authorities and government departments.

Complaints are received through the four regional NRCB offices set up to help administer the new regulations and through the NRCB toll-free number (1-866-383-6722).

When a complaint is registered at the call centre or regional NRCB office, a call information sheet is filled out noting who called, the nature of the concern, the location of the caller and the location with which the caller has a concern.

This call information sheet is then sent to one of the six NRCB field inspectors in the province. Two are located in the Lethbridge office, two in the Red Deer office, one in Fairview and one in Barrhead. Once the complaint is received, the field inspector will contact the complainant. "The inspector will talk to the person to gain an understanding of the concern and find out more details," says Bolton. "Sometimes the call is more an inquiry about the rules. For instance, the caller may want to know how close to a stream manure can be applied. As soon as we explain what the rules are, the caller may indicate that the operator is in compliance and no further action is required."

Typically, after talking to the person who lodged the complaint, the field inspector will visit the operation site. When possible, the inspector will try to notify the operator in advance and make an arrangement to meet. However, if the inspector is of the opinion that it's the kind of issue that needs to be responded to immediately, the inspector may show up unannounced.

"The roles and powers of inspectors are clearly defined in the Act," adds Bolton. "Inspectors have the power to enter onto land that is associated with agricultural production to determine whether an operator is in compliance with the Act and Regulations. In determining whether approvals, registrations, authorizations, terms and conditions of a cancellation are being met, the inspectors may inspect any land or building, other than private dwelling places, that are being used in connection with an agricultural operation. Inspections can include, but are not limited to: conducting tests and taking measurements, taking photographs and audio-visual records, and putting into motion any equipment used to manage manure."

When the site visit or visits are completed, the field inspector will determine if the producer is in compliance with the Act and Regulations and existing permit conditions or if the producer is creating an inappropriate disturbance. If the field inspector determines the operator has an issue that needs rectification, the NRCB has several tools to ensure the situation is addressed.

"We do also get complaints where the field inspector determines the operator is complying with the Act, the regulations and the permit conditions and that nothing needs to change with the operation," says Bolton.

For more information about the Act, Regulations and Standards, or to receive a copy of CFO newsletters and articles, write to Alberta Agriculture, 3rd floor, 4920 - 51 Street, Red Deer, AB T4N 6K8; call (403) 340-5359 (dial 310-0000 for toll free access in Alberta); e-mail <cfoinfo@gov.ab.ca>; or visit the Alberta Agriculture web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/navigation/livestock/cfo/index.html>.

*Contact:* *Louise Starling* *Alex Bolton*
*(403) 340-5306* *(403) 340-5325*

## Questionable feed quality claims

Alberta is stretched for winter feed resources. Cattle producers who are having trouble securing adequate amounts of winter feed are looking at many alternative feeds. These include nontraditional alternatives and feed stuffs that have not been considered before, many from outside the region.

"Cattle producers are urged to be careful when looking at alternate feed sources for their herds," says Mark MacNaughton, beef/forage specialist at Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development's Ag Info Centre. "Alberta Agriculture staff are reporting that some feeds and supplements being offered these days are not quite up to snuff as far as quality is concerned. Quality claims have at times been over-stated and at other times been bordering on outlandish."

Reports of greenfeed with energy levels equaling grain and protein levels equaling second cut alfalfa are just not credible. It would be hard for any greenfeed to reach those levels. Some products are being sold as containing 50 or 60 per cent protein – which just cannot be true. These claims could be a result of

*Cont'd on page 3*

erroneous testing or mixed samples, but such extreme claims should be questioned. When purchasing feed, it's important to remember that certain feeds can only attain a certain quality and exaggerated claims should be viewed with skepticism.

"Producers are trying very hard to get the best product they can for their herds, but they need to take the time to check the feed quality before buying. It wouldn't be unreasonable to take a sample and get it tested, or take a moment and contact a nutritionist to be sure they are getting what they are paying for," adds MacNaughton.

Liquid supplements have also caught the eye of some producers. Many of these liquid supplements have extremely high energy claims; however, there is no science available for some of these supplements. Claims of one pound of supplement equaling several pounds of barley sound great, but only if they can be backed up with solid research and energy evaluations.

"Many of the product claims circulating are simply too good to be true, and as the old adage goes, 'if it sounds too good to be true – it most likely is'," says MacNaughton. "It's really a case of Buyer Beware. Producers are welcome to contact the Alberta Ag-Info Centre to discuss feed needs and options that would suit them best. A nutritionist that producers have worked with before should certainly be consulted. They will have a good handle on what the real energy level and protein percentage are in any given supplement. By all means contact a professional before making a purchase that could turn out to be ill-advised."

Check alternative feed supplements carefully before buying as some of the claims being made about them are a bit far-fetched. Be careful when approached with some of these products. Claims about them may indeed be 'too good to be true'.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Contact:* | *Mark MacNaughton* | *Alberta Ag-Info Centre* |
| | *(403) 742-7926* | *1-866-882-7677* |

## Woodchips and sawdust appetite appeasers

An alternate feed source that some cattle producers have been considering this year is woodchips.

"Woodchips and sawdust can be used in cattle rations but they are a filler ration only, and not for nutrition," says Mark MacNaughton, beef/forage specialist at Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development's Ag Info Centre. "Woodchips have zero nutrition. With supplements supplying total nutrition in a reduced version of total feed, the animals often still feel hungry. Woodchips can be used as an appetite appeaser and can be fed on a limited basis to fulfill the rumen and satisfy hunger. Woodchips and sawdust would have to be fed in a silage base as part of a total mixed ration. As free choice, it is very unlikely that these substances would be readily consumed."

While aspen and maple may contain some minor nutrient value, the other tree species contain no nutrition and just make great filler. Hunting down a large amount of woodchips is not recommended, but on a limited basis, this product can be used as bulk in cattle diets.

"There have been documented reports, such as during World War II in Scandinavian countries, where use was in the thousands of tonnes, producers short on feed got cattle through the tough times using woodchips in rations as a bulk feed source," adds MacNaughton. In the last 30 years in North Dakota, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, research looked at the viability of feeding woodchips with no detrimental results. "You need to know what you are doing with woodchips and gear up for it. Feeding large amounts of woodchips isn't something that you can just dive into."

Sawmills in the province do have mill residue that can be accessed. A list of sawmill contacts willing to sell woodchips can be viewed by visiting the Alberta Forest Products internet site at <www.abforestprod.org>.

Before venturing into woodchip feeding, consult a nutritionist or call the Alberta Ag-Info Centre. Any new feed type should be well understood before it is given to cattle.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Contact:* | *Mark MacNaughton* | *Alberta Ag-Info Centre* |
| | *(403) 742-7926* | *1-866-882-7677* |

## Preserving moisture in the field

Capturing and making the best use of the moisture and precipitation received is one of the aims and benefits of direct seeding. Once again, the 2002 growing season has hammered home the painful message that moisture is very often the number one component lacking in cropping systems. While direct seeding cannot create moisture, it certainly is the best cropping system when it comes to preserving moisture and turning it into yield.

"At the Alberta Reduced Tillage LINKAGES (RTL), our vision is that Alberta farmers, through the adoption of sustainable cropping systems such as reduced tillage, will improve soil quality, reduce and eliminate erosion, be economically viable, produce safe, nutritious food and conserve and enhance Alberta's natural resources and the quality of the environment on 80 per cent of Alberta's cropped land," says Peter Gamache, team leader of RTL, Edmonton.

In order to help Alberta farmers adopt direct seeding systems, four agronomist work full-time on the project in Alberta. They work individually with farmers and put on demonstrations, tours and meetings. Nick Underwood, formerly with UFA and

Cont'd on page 4

the Canola Council, covers the Peace area. Underwood can be reached at (780) 814-1232. Ron Heller, former agricultural fieldman, covers the North area from Edson to Lloydminster. Heller can be reached at (780) 853-8262. Rick Taillieu, Olds College grad and former pulse technician with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, covers the Central area from Sundre to the Saskatchewan border. Taillieu can be reached at (403) 556-8235. Don Wentz, long time district agriculturalist and salinity specialist with Alberta Agriculture, covers the area south of Highway #1. Wentz can be reached at (403) 381-5845.

"Alberta producers interested in getting into direct seeding, wanting more information or needing to talk to a farmer who is direct seeding, can give one of the agronomists a call," adds Gamache.

Through the generous support of 10 partners, RTL is able to provide extension support for farmers and industry agronomists. The partners are: Alberta Agriculture, Monsanto Canada, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA), Olds College, Dow AgroSciences, Alberta Conservation Tillage Society, Flexi-Coil, BASF and UFA. The project also receive funding from the Agriculture and Food Council.

More information about reduced tillage and coming events are available on the RTL web site <www.reducedtillage.ca>. It has extensive information and links in the *Knowledge Tidbit* section and further specific information supplied by the agronomists.

*Contact: Peter Gamache*
*(780) 422-7922*

## Province honours Century Farm and Ranch Families

More than 270 Alberta farm and ranch families have been honored with the Century Farm and Ranch Award since 1992. Now, as the province's centenary approaches, many more may be eligible for the provincial program says Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

"Many of our pioneer families may not know about the program and as a result have not had the opportunity to apply," says McClellan. "They deserve to be honored for their contribution and dedication to our agricultural industry and our province."

Award recipients are presented with a commemorative bronze plaque honoring their historical contributions to agriculture and rural communities within the province.

Award families must still own an original homestead property of at least 160 acres that they have been working for 100 years or more. To date, the Balzer family are the earliest award recipients settling in 1894, after selling their California business to begin farming on the good land advertised in Alberta. The Serbu family arrived in the Willingdon area from Bukowena, Austria in 1899; and the Bergquists, after emigrating from Sweden via South Dakota, relocated to Alberta in 1901, with the fourth and fifth generations still working the Bawlf area farm.

McClellan commends these farm and ranch families who persevered through the physical hardships, natural disasters, and economic hard times, playing an important role developing our province. "These families set down roots, cultivated the land, were active in communities, and helped to establish the rich social fabric of our province, growing Alberta into the Canadian agricultural leader it is today."

To apply for the award, contact Lillian Chan with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development at (780) 422-0492, or download an application form from the Alberta Agriculture web site at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/ministry/programs/centuryaward.html>. Brochures and applications are also available at local MLA offices.

*Contact: Bard Haddrell*
*Executive Director, Agriculture Information Division*
*Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development*
*(780)427-5312*
*Terry Willock*
*Communications Director*
*Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development*
*(780) 422-7683*

Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton

## Swine Technology Workshop

The ***4th Annual Swine Technology Workshop*** is being held at the Harvest Centre, Westerner Agriplex in Red Deer on October 29 and 30, 2002. The theme of the workshop this year is Swine Health, Production and Housing Issues.

"Nursery nutrition and management, housing and health strategies, and production finances are some of the topics that will be addressed," says Amanda Whelan, agrologist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Workshop presentations will be made by John Patience from the Prairie Swine Centre; swine veterinarians Chris Misutka and Mike Sheridan; livestock engineer Clarence Froese; Al Theede, creator of Pork Plan; barn manager Tony Nichol; pig handling consultant Nancy Lidster; and nutritionists Jim Gowans and Frank Aherne."

*Cont'd on page 5*

Registration for the workshop is $50 per person per day or $75 per person for both days. Cheques made out to Swine Technology Workshop can be sent to:

Swine Technology Workshop
#204, 7000-113 Street
Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6

For more information about the workshop, please contact Whelan at (780) 422-0645 (e-mail: amanda.whelan@gov.ab.ca) or Jim Gowans at (403) 318-6599 (e-mail: jimgowans@shaw.ca).

The Swine Technology Workshop is a joint venture between Alberta Pork and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, and is sponsored by many of the businesses serving the pork industry.

*Contact:* *Amenda Whelan*
*(780) 422-0645*

# Agri-News Briefs

## Speakers finalized for Hort Congress

The 2002 Alberta Horticultural Congress has two keynote speakers on the agenda, Kit Grant will speak on Challenging Change and So Much to Do and So Little Time and Lori Colburne will make a presentation on Increasing Your Business Without Increasing Your Advertising. The Alberta Hort Congress will be held in Edmonton at the Mayfield Hotel and Conference Center on November 14 and 15, 2002.

Some of the other speakers and presenters at the event are:

- Dr. Adam Dale, U of Guelph, on Raspberry Cane Management and Growing Raspberries in the Greenhouse.
- Carolyn Lee Jones, from VanDusen Botanical Gardens, with Pizzazz with Annuals and Hanging Baskets.
- Steve Kovacs, Waterscene Designs on Water Gardening
- Clarence Peters, Sask. Agriculture with The Art of Pruning Trees
- Graeme Murphy IPM specialist from Vineland, Ontario offering Biological Control in Greenhouses.
- Robert Thompson and Dan Ponchet with the story of the very successful Saanich Pennisula Direct Marketing Organization
- Dr. David Bell, Indiana University to explain the antioxidants in berries.

Congress programs and registration packages have been mailed out to past participants. A full program and registration form are available on the Hort Congress web site at <www.albertahortcongress.com>, or phone 1-877-998-2782 or (780) 415 2324 to have a registration package mailed to you.

## GMO presentation

The University of Alberta is hosting a video presentation ***The Genetic Takeover (or Mutant Food)*** on September 26, 2002 at 7:00 p.m. The presentation takes a hard look at genetically modified plants and shows how these products have become part of the daily diet and are already found in 75 per cent of processed foods. This 'revolution' has to a great extent occurred without consumer awareness and without the knowledge of the potential risks to human health and to the environment. Many scientists and farmers question and vigorously condemn the absence of independent, adequate testing. Screenings take place in the Zeidler Hall – main floor of the Citadel Theatre Complex, 9828 - 101A Avenue, Edmonton. For more information, call (780) 425-9212 or e-mail <metro@metrocinema.ab.ca>.

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Agri-News

September 30, 2002

## *A very real risk of spreading* Fusarium graminearum *into Alberta through imported straw and hay*

Alberta cattle producers facing local shortages of feed and bedding are bringing in large volumes of straw and hay from outside of the province. With the concern focused on obtaining adequate feed and bedding for Alberta cattle herds, it is important to realize that this imported straw and hay can be infected with *Fusarium graminearum*.

"*Fusarium graminearum* is the fungus that causes fusarium head blight in cereals," says James Calpas, provincial integrated pest management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Pest Risk Management Unit, Edmonton. "The fungus causes direct yield loss in cereals and also produces mycotoxins in the infected grain. The most common mycotoxin produced by *Fusarium graminearum* is deoxynivalenol (DON). The presence of DON in grain reduces the marketability of the grain and has negative effects on the health of livestock."

In areas where *Fusarium graminearum* is well established, such as Manitoba and south eastern Saskatchewan, the fungus overwinters primarily in cereal straw and stubble. This means that straw from these areas is very likely to contain *Fusarium graminearum*. The fact is that *Fusarium graminearum* infected straw is being brought into Alberta. Tests for *Fusarium graminearum* carried out on some straw shipments have demonstrated infection levels of 40 to 50 per cent. Samples from grass hay have also been submitted for testing. The test results have not yet been received, but it is likely that there will be some *Fusarium graminearum* present

"Farmers are encouraged not to buy straw or hay that has not been tested and found free of *Fusarium graminearum*," adds Calpas. "When the hay and straw is handled, do not spread the material in or near tilled fields. Infected straw represents a very high risk for introducing *Fusarium graminearum* into a field. Use only one bedding area. All waste straw should be composted in manure piles so that the temperature of the piles

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## This Week

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

reaches 60 to 70 °C for at least 14 days. This will ensure that any *Fusarium graminearum* in the composted straw is killed. Burning the waste straw is also an option."

Hay must be handled in the same manner as outlined in the best management practices for feed grain. Ensure that all loads of straw and hay transported within the province are covered.

"The drought has placed considerable hardship on Alberta producers and it is understandable that farmers are looking for ways to sustain themselves to the next year," says Calpas. "*Fusarium graminearum* represents a very serious long-term threat to Alberta's agriculture industry and if we focus completely on the short-term, *Fusarium graminearum* will become established in the province. *Fusarium graminearum* will cause hardship to all sectors of the industry and will cause the greatest damage when moisture and growing conditions improve. With *Fusarium graminearum* it is important to realize that we really have no effective control measures beyond prevention, and we'll only get one shot at prevention."

*Contact: James Calpas*
*(780) 422-4911*

## Animal Health Investigation Process for cattle exposed to products of oil and gas production

In Alberta, the petroleum and livestock industries, especially the cattle industry, often use the same land base. This close proximity sometimes results in accidental exposure of people and livestock to products of oil and gas production. When the activities of the oil and gas industry are obviously a cause of the dead or sick animals in a herd, such as when animals are found consuming an obvious spill, there are seldom any difficulties with the producer and industry resolving the problem. However, other situations may be more subjective, particularly when a long period of time has elapsed between the time of exposure and observation of clinical disease in a group of livestock.

To address situations where the link between affected cattle and exposure is unclear, the Animal Health Investigation Process (AHIP) was developed as set out in 1995 in the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board (EUB) General Bulletin 95-10. A revised AHIP was adopted in 1998 in draft form outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) involving the Alberta Cattle Commission, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, Small Explorers and Producers Association of Canada, EUB and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. The AHIP has now been formally approved by the five organizations.

"The AHIP is an attempt to provide an unbiased means of determining if exposure to the products of oil and gas production is responsible for the clinical disease or loss of production observed in a group of cattle," says Dr. Gerald Ollis, Chief Provincial Veterinarian, Food Safety Division, Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton. "Investigations of complaints involving livestock other than cattle are the responsibility of Alberta Agriculture. Laboratory support to animal health investigators is also provided by Alberta Agriculture."

Only the affected livestock owner can initiate the AHIP. This is done by contacting the local field office of the EUB and ensuring the required forms are filled out completely.

The Animal Health Complaint Form consists of three parts. A representative of the EUB completes Part A, while the livestock owner completes Part B. The producer's veterinarian completes Part C and must declare that they have made a diligent effort to investigate the problem(s) observed in the herd and that common diseases, management and nutritional factors have been ruled out as a cause.

Since September 1, 1998, a number of complaints have been investigated under the former AHIP. In some cases, common diseases, management and/or nutritional factors were the major or sole reason(s) for the losses observed. **It is important to understand that only those complaints involving disease problems that have been adequately worked up by the herd veterinarian will be considered for investigation.**

A copy of the EUB's ***Memorandum of Understanding for Investigations of Animal Health Complaints Involving the Petroleum Industry*** (including forms) is available on the following web site <http://www.eub.gov.ab.ca/bbs/ils/ils/pdf/il2002-04.pdf>.

*Contact: Dr. Gerald Ollis*
*(780) 427-3448*

## The future of food – nutraceutical or functional?

Nutraceutical has become a buzzword in the world of value-added industries and health-conscious consumers. What does it really mean, and where does the term functional food fit in? Often the terms are used interchangeably, but there is a difference.

According to Health Canada, a nutraceutical is a product isolated or purified from food that is generally sold in medicinal forms not usually associated with food. It is demonstrated to have a physiological benefit or provide protection against chronic disease. Reducing cholesterol, mitigating cardiovascular disease and delaying the onset of osteoporosis are the most attractive targets for nutraceuticals.

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"A functional food may be a conventional food, or similar in appearance, and is consumed as part of a usual diet," says Linda Hawk, M.Ed., Ag-Entrepreneurship Action Team with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Medicine Hat. "It is demonstrated to have physiological benefits and could reduce the risk of chronic disease beyond basic nutritional functions."

Sharon Faye, horticulture information officer with Alberta Agriculture, adds "Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada describe functional foods as natural whole foods whose nutritional values beyond the basic nutrition has been uncovered through recent scientific research. The majority of vegetables, grains, fish, meat and dairy products contain several components that deliver benefits beyond their basic nutritional value. For example, lycopenes in tomatoes and lutein in green vegetables contribute to the maintenance of healthy vision."

Key factors driving the nutraceutical and functional food market include an aging population, increasing health care costs, consumer interest in nutrition, demand for healthier food, food regulations, advances in food technology and increased scientific and clinical evidence linking diet and disease.

In 2000, the global nutrition industry represented $140 billion (U.S.) in consumer sales. Of this, approximately 37 per cent is the global functional foods market. In Canada, total sales in the industry amount to about $4.2 billion (U.S.) with $2 billion (U.S.) in functional food sales.

"Canada's growth in the nutrition industry, including the functional food segment, is on par with other countries such as Japan and Europe at about eight per cent per year," says Faye. "The fact that the functional food market is growing at about the same level as conventional food and beverage shows that there is good opportunity for Canadian products. Canadian grown fruits and vegetables, and their functional food and nutraceutical benefits, would likely fit into the functional foods product segments including fresh or processed product."

For more information, check the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada web site at <http://www.agr.gc.ca/fnd/nff/FAQs.html> and Health Canada at <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpb-dgps/therapeut/zfiles/english/ffn/nutra_pol_e.html>

*Contact* *Linda Hawk*
*(403) 528-5250*

## What do you think about succession?

More agriculture businesses are facing the issue of succession at this time than ever before because of the age of present owners and managers. There is a huge asset base in land, machinery, capital and expertise. It is important that these assets are re-invested to the best advantage of industry and individuals. Economic conditions are also increasing the rate of business succession, as the current generation sees an opportunity to maximize the return on their investment through transfer to the next generation

"Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development will be holding four focus group sessions to talk about farm succession," says Dean Dyck, financial business analyst with Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development, Red Deer. "We need farmers and farm managers thoughts and suggestions on research, information, education and consultation in farm succession. Alberta Agriculture wants to be able to deliver useful and complete information addressing farm transfer issues that will meet the needs of farm families."

Participants will be able to share information on what works and what doesn't. Also, producers and farm managers will be consulted and asked to give suggestions on a new program Alberta Agriculture is considering developing.

Locations and dates (all sessions will start at 1:00 p.m. and finish by 4:00 p.m.)

- **Grande Prairie** – Monday, October 7, 2002 - Grande Prairie Inn
- **Nisku** – Tuesday, October 8, 2002 - Executive Royal Inn
- **Red Deer** – Wednesday, October 9, 2002 - Black Knight Inn
- **Lethbridge** – Thursday, October 10, 2002 - Lethbridge Lodge

There is no registration fee and lunch will be provided. Seating will be limited to 10 participants at each of the sessions.

*Contact* *Dean Dyck*
*(403) 340-7007*
*E-mail: dean.dyck@gov.ab.ca*

## Ag videos easier to access

Borrowing an Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development video is as easy as contacting your local public library. The Alberta Agriculture video collection is now being managed by the Alberta Government Library's Neil Crawford Provincial Centre site. Videos may be borrowed in person from the library or by interlibrary loan through local public, academic or special libraries.

"Having Alberta Agriculture videos available to the public via interlibrary loan is a really good way to increase access", says Alberta Agriculture information officer Ken Blackley, Edmonton. "It makes borrowing even more convenient as Albertans can request videos through their local public library."

To borrow via an interlibrary loan, the borrower needs to be a member of the local library where the video is being ordered. To borrow in person, members of the public will require a NEOS or Alberta Library (TAL) card. Alberta Library cards are available free to members of most public and academic libraries in Alberta.

Blackley says the loaner titles are listed on the Alberta Agriculture web site <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/navigation/publications/videos/index.html>. "The web page also contains complete instructions on how to access the collection," he adds.

The Alberta Government Library Neil Crawford Provincial Centre site is located at 101, J.G. O'Donoghue Bldg, 7000-113 street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6. Library hours are 8:15 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday.

*Contact:* *Ken Blackley*
*(780) 422-3951*

*Jane Starr*
*Head Librarian*
*Alberta Government Library*
*Neil Crawford Provincial Centre site*
*(780) 492-7689*

## Winners named for the 4-H Leader of the Year awards

Outstanding dedication to youth and the spirit of volunteerism were celebrated as winners were officially announced for the second annual The Co-operators/4-H National Volunteer Leader of the Year Award. The award celebrates the selfless work of all 4-H volunteer leaders across the country.

The award was established through a partnership between The Co-operators and Canadian 4-H Council to celebrate the United Nations' International Year of the Volunteer. Because of the overwhelming response, the partners decided to make the award an annual program. More than 32,000 4-H members across the country depend on more than 10,000 volunteer leaders to run clubs and oversee projects. 4-H is Canada's longest-running rural-based youth development organization, with more than 2,500 active clubs from coast to coast.

"4-H makes such a positive and long-lasting impact on its members thanks to the dedication and commitment of the volunteer leaders. These are the people in our communities who step forward to give their time and their energy for the benefit of our children and youth," said Elizabeth Crouse, president of Canadian 4-H Council. "As we approach the 90th Anniversary of 4-H in Canada, we reflect on the many lives that have been shaped and guided by outstanding volunteers in this program."

Ten provincial winners were declared, and from these a national winner was drawn in a lottery. Provincial winners will be awarded a certificate, $100 cash prize, plus Co-operators and Canadian 4-H merchandise. The Grand Prize – a $1,100 cash award – goes to Carol Pittman, of Saskatchewan.

The 2002 winners are:

- British Columbia – Cathy Mumford
- Alberta – Leona Petherbridge
- Saskatchewan – Carol Pittman – national winner
- Manitoba – Bill Windsor
- Ontario – Barb Smith
- Quebec – James McQuat
- New Brunswick – Linda Porter
- Nova Scotia – Ilze Firminger
- Prince Edward Island – Nancy Gill
- Newfoundland – Verna Hayward

The Co-operators is a group of wholly Canadian-owned companies that specialize in insurance and financial products, property development, and management and investment counseling.

The Canadian 4-H Council is a not-for-profit agency that co-ordinates all national 4-H activities in Canada. Founded in 1933, the Council offers conferences, exchanges, scholarships and international travel opportunities to thousands of 4-H members and leaders across the country. The Canadian 4-H Council promotes the 4-H program at the national level to government, business and the general public.

*Contact:* *Chris Forrest*
*Communications Manager*
*Canadian 4-H Council*
*(613) 234-4448 or <cforrest@4-h-canada.ca>*

*Jayne Russell*
*Public Relations*
*The Co-operators*
*1-877-795-7272, ext. 2455*

# 20 Alberta youth win IVOMEC® 4-H Trust Fund Scholarships

Fifty 4-H youth from across Canada will receive $1,000 scholarships for post-secondary education as Merial Canada continues its fifth year of awarding IVOMEC® 4-H Trust Fund Scholarships. The scholarship winners earned the honors by exploring the Internet's impact on farming and livestock production. Winners expressed their thoughts on how the Internet and computer technology can simplify daily tasks. Entries included essays of 500 to 750 words, videos, speeches on audiocassette, and posters.

Alberta scholarship recipients are: Crystal Brown (Rochester), Patricia Brown (Erskine), Morgan Charlton (Czar), Crystal Chittick (Mayerthorpe), Kimberley Clennett (Mannville), Ty Corbiell (Cluny), Amy Deagle (Consort), Anita Doktor (Vilna), Nadine Fleck (Bodo), Stephanie Hoover (Delia), Kendell Janzen (Tofield), Allan Lyster (Mayerthorpe), Karen Nauta (High River), Amanda Newton (Del Bonita), Jody Newton (Del Bonita), Chelsey Peeters (Edmonton), Tom Richmond (Carstairs), Amanda Vogstad (Rosedale), Ainsley Wall (Coaldale), and Brian Weeks (Castor)

"Today's young people are very familiar with computers and technology, and we received some innovative suggestions regarding every day farm management and animal production," said Jacinthe Moreau, marketing manager for Merial Canada. "We are exploring ways to publish some of this unique thinking."

Merial Canada has funded more than 250 4-H scholarships and has earned the Canadian 4-H Council's prestigious Brass Award, one of only two organizations to achieve this elite level of sponsor recognition. Merial has donated $425,000 to the scholarship fund and related national 4-H programs, in addition to its support of local chapters and events throughout Canada

"The Canadian 4-H Council is honored to be partnered with Merial Canada, a company that genuinely believes in the importance of investing in our youth," said Elizabeth Crouse, president of the Canadian 4-H Council. "The national IVOMEC® 4-H Trust Fund Scholarship program supports future leaders by supporting their education today."

"We believe these scholarships represent our dedication to the future of Canadian agriculture," said Dr. Stewart Bauck, director of Merial Canada. "We hope that each time a Canadian producer reaches for our product on the shelf, they know that they too are supporting education and youth development for agriculture."

Scholarship fund levels are based on sales of several Merial Canada products. Merial Canada is the world's leading animal-healthcare company.

The Canadian 4-H Council is a non-profit organization that coordinates all national 4-H activities. Founded in 1933, the Council offers conferences, exchanges, scholarships and international travel opportunities to thousands of 4-H members and leaders across the country.

For more information on 4-H, visit the 4-H web site at <www.4h.ab.ca>, or call (780) 422-4H4H, toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first.

*Contact:* *Alberta 4-H Office*
*(780) 422-4444*

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# Agri-News Briefs

## Seminar on Wills and succession planning

The Farm Estate Advisory Group has conducted succession seminars with Alberta Agriculture for the past eight years. This year, they were asked by the Ag Societies to address specific business and family concerns in their seminars and have them addressed by professionals. The speakers featured this year at each seminar include a local accountant, lawyer and an estate advisor. These local specialists will answer questions and address the following issues:

- minimizing taxes at death, roll-overs and the capital gains exemption
- the different options on how to be fair with non-participating children
- having to partner with unwanted siblings, in-laws, or spouses of deceased partners,
- ways to manage inheritances even posthumously, for example - taking care of handicapped individuals
- how to communicate with family/partners so there is business and family harmony before and after the head of the business slows down, retires or dies
- how to know if lawyers, accountants, advisors, etc. are working for your benefit

| **Date** | **Time** | **Location** |
|---|---|---|
| Nov. 7 | 7:00 p.m. | Westerose |
| Nov. 13 | 7:00 p.m. | Buck Lake |
| Nov. 19 | 7:00 p.m. | Cold Lake |

For details, contact your local Ag Society or contact Richard Baker, (780) 487-5202. Registration cost for these seminars is $40 per farm family. Participants will receive hundreds of dollars of advice and information for the price of admission! Additional seminars will be held during the year. The dates of the remaining seminars will be provided at a later date.

## TD 4-H Agriculture Scholarship deadline is fast approaching

The ***TD 4-H Agriculture Scholarship*** program is valued at approximately $10,000, and recognizes up to ten students from across Canada. One student per province, with plans to attend a Canadian college or university for agriculture-related or agri-business studies, will be awarded a scholarship for achieving the highest academic standing in their province. ***TD 4-H Agriculture Scholarships*** are open to all active 4-H members who are at least sixteen years of age and have just completed their last year of high school. So far, no applications have been received from Alberta. The deadline for applications is October 4, 2002. Scholarship applications can be downloaded from the 4-H web site at <www.4-h-canada.ca/scholarships.html>.

## ACPC Director nominations sought

The Alberta Canola Producers Commission (ACPC) is seeking nominations for four Directors in Regions 2, 5, 8 and 11. Any canola producer who has paid the ACPC service charge on canola sold since August 1, 2000 is an eligible producer and can stand for election as a Director. An eligible producer can be an individual, corporation, partnership or organization. Eligible producers must produce canola within the defined region in order to be nominated, but do not have to reside within the region. Nominations for the position of Director must be filed in writing at the ACPC office, Suite 170, 14315 - 118 Avenue, Edmonton, AB T5L 4S6, or by fax at (780) 451-6933 on or before **November 1, 2002**. For more information about the regions involved or the position of director, contact Ward Toma, ACPC general manager, 1-800-551-6652 or e-mail <acpc@canola.ab.ca>.

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# Agri-News

October 7, 2002

## Western range science seminar

Rangeland productivity is increasingly threatened on many fronts by a variety of uses. Increased pressure on Alberta's rangelands from modern society has raised awareness of the need for even better management of these sensitive areas.

"Pressures are being experienced on rangelands from agriculture, oil and gas exploration, subdivision for acreage developments, as well as recreation activities," says Barry Adams, range management specialist with Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD), Lethbridge. "The development of knowledge and improved awareness are essential to keep pace with the stresses being put on these valuable lands."

Leading rangeland research scientists from across North America will be making presentations at the second Western Range Science Seminar being held in Medicine Hat on January 19 to 21, 2003. Research presented at the seminar will give producers, agency resource managers and policy-makers information needed to make workable, sustainable rangeland management decisions.

***Rangeland Viability*** is the theme for this seminar that includes six sessions that take an in-depth look at rangeland ecosystems: rangeland livestock production, rangeland ecology; rangeland hydrology; riparian areas and forest grazing; and land use impacts on range landscapes, ranching and wildlife

"Part of the rangeland ecology session will deal with drought impacts on range and range management during drought and will be of special interest to many livestock producers given climatic conditions in the past years," adds Adams. "As well, water issues, seasonal grazing, rangeland reclamation, biting insects and manure application on rangeland, among many other topics will give producers and decisions makers a lot of information to benefit from."

For information on registration, contact Brenda at the Rangeland Management Branch (ASRD) in Lethbridge (403) 382-4298.

*Contact: Barry Adams*
*(403) 382-4299*

## This Week

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## Communities in Bloom Awards

Every one of the 50 communities that took part in the recent 2002 Provincial Communities in Bloom program reaped the benefits of being involved. At the awards presentation for Communities in Bloom, held in Brooks on September 7, 2002, the winners in each of the eight categories were honoured.

"From a judge's perspective, I have to say that the communities I had the pleasure of visiting and evaluating are some of the nicest places to visit," says Shelley Barkley, information officer at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South, Brooks. "This was a tough year to judge because of the drought and grasshoppers. These limiting factors were taken into consideration in the evaluation process. Whether the grass was green or not, how the grass is managed is the important thing. If grasshoppers had eaten some of the plants in a planter, it was the fact that the planters were there and were being watered and maintained that the judges weighed in their evaluations."

Communities were divided into categories according to their population. They were awarded 1 to 5 'Blooms', 5 Blooms being the highest award. There was a winner in each category, and sometimes two, and they are:

| | |
|---|---|
| 0 - 1,000 | Caroline, Arrowwood |
| 1,001 - 3,000 | High Prairie, Calmar |
| 3,001 - 5,000 | Devon |
| 5,001 - 10,000 | Olds, Stettler |
| 10,001 - 20,000 | Brooks, Airdrie |
| 20,001 - 50,000 | Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, Fort McMurray |
| 50,001 – 100,000 | Greater Red Deer |
| Historical Parks | The Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village |

Ten judges, working in pairs, brought a vast wealth of knowledge to the evaluation process. Judges had a variety of areas of expertise, from landscape design experience or grounds maintenance experience to horticultural instructing. One of the Alberta judges, Brendan Casement, a former Alberta Agriculture staff member, was chosen to be an international judge. He was paired with a man from Belgium and visited England and Ireland to judge for Communities in Bloom.

"Communities in Bloom is a national and provincial program that promotes environmental awareness and municipal beautification," says Barkley. "The program involves whole communities and challenges them to improve the visual appeal of the city, town or village."

Communities in Bloom has eight criteria that are considered in the community judging. Success is based on the community's efforts in managing its:

- tidiness effort
- environmental awareness
- community involvement
- natural and architectural heritage conservation
- urban forestry
- landscaped areas
- floral displays
- turf and ground cover areas

A special mention needs to be made of the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village which was a five-bloom winner and the first historic site/living history museum in Canada to apply under this prestigious award program. Its achievement rating of 88 per cent means that the Village is automatically qualified to compete on a national level.

Communities interested in becoming a part of this rewarding and exciting program should contact Bernice Knight, provincial coordinator for Communities in Bloom.

*Contact:* *Shelley Barkley*
*(403) 362-1308*

*Bernice Knight*
*(780) 387-4967*
*bloom1@telusplanet.net*

## Autumn needle shedding

The shortening days and cool nights means trees will change colour and the leaves will fall to the ground. This loss of leaves is not just something that happens to poplar and lilac but to the evergreens like spruce, pine, cedar and juniper as well. The evergreens will drop these needles because they no longer help to sustain the tree, but are a draw on the life support system of the tree.

"The foliage in the inside of the conifer, closest to the trunk, turns yellow or gold, then brown and eventually fall off," says Shelley Barkley, information officer at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South, Brooks. "Usually this process is gradual and goes virtually unnoticed, but sometimes many needles will discolour all at once. A sudden colour change and needle shed can be very alarming because it appears that the tree is dying."

Autumn needle shed is probably the most noticeable in pines. Pine trees will hold their needles for three to four years, while spruce and fir will hold their needles longer. Pine needles grow on the branch in bundles or groups of two, three or five. Spruce needles grow singly, while cedars and some junipers have scale-like leaves covering branchlets instead of needles. When pine shed those inner needles, they drop the bundles, spruce drop single needles, (not necessarily the oldest needles) and the other cedars and junipers drop entire branchlets.

"Stress to the plant, such as drought, poorly-drained soils, transplant shock or spider mites, can cause it to drop more

*Cont'd on page 3*

needles than it normally would," adds Barkley. "Even after a stressful winter, some needles can be dropped in the spring. Evergreens grow at the tips of the branches so once inner needles are lost, they will not be replaced. Not to fear though, they will put on new growth at the tips next spring and the area of lost needles will not be noticeable."

Although needle shed is a regular occurrence, keeping your evergreens as healthy as possible with good watering practices and insect control can lessen the amount of needles lost. Lastly, remember to water evergreens well in late October. This will help to prevent damage to the root systems during the winter.

*Contact: Shelley Barkley*
*(403) 362-1308*

## Growing Alberta Leadership Awards

Growing Alberta's GALA event, held each year during Agriculture and Food Week, will honour five exceptional leaders in Alberta's agriculture and food industry.

"The Growing Alberta Leadership Awards (GALA) are awarded in five separate categories, Food Safety, Innovation, Economic Development, Environmental Stewardship and Building Youth Leadership," says Jennifer Fisk, executive director of Growing Alberta, Leduc. "This year's winners, for the second annual awarding of the GALAs, were chosen from nominations submitted by industry peers."

GALAs recognize individuals or organizations who represent outstanding leadership and proven performance in Alberta's agriculture and food industry. All nominees must prove leadership and the impact they have had in Alberta. Nominations are reviewed by a committee of Growing Alberta Board members and invited industry leaders. All nominations are evaluated using established criteria for the specific category.

This year's GALA winners are:

- Food Safety – Dr. Lynn McMullen, Associate Professor, Food Microbiology, U of A
- Innovation – Bob Kalef, President, Centennial Foods
- Economic Development – Bernie and Mike Kotelko, partners, Highland Feeders
- Environmental Stewardship – the Alberta Conservation Tillage Society, ACTS
- Building Youth Leadership – University of Alberta Poultry Team

The GALA winners will be honoured at the Growing Alberta 5th Annual Harvest Gala in Calgary on October 18, 2002.

For further information on the GALA winners, or for information on the Harvest Gala event, contact Growing Alberta at (780) 955-3714 or visit the Growing Alberta web site at <www.growingalberta.com>.

*Contact: Jennifer Fisk*
*(780) 955-3714*

## Conference for farm direct marketers

***Explore Direct 2003*** is a conference for agriculture producers and processors who market their products direct to the consumer. The conference agenda will include presentations and information to help farm direct marketers increase sales, attract new customers, investigate the latest farm direct marketing practices, build professional relationships and maximize effectiveness of their image.

The Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas organization (ATTRA) says that farm direct marketing allows farmers to take greater control of marketing by bypassing traditional channels and marketing directly to consumers at the local and regional level. Foods that do not require much processing before consumption – such as fruits, vegetables and meat – are ideal for one-on-one marketing. Direct marketing is often quite unorthodox and may take the form of roadside stands, pick-your-own operations, farmers' markets and sales to restaurants, upscale retail or specialty stores.

"Prospects for direct farmer-consumer interaction are particularly promising at the rural-urban fringe, where producers can take advantage of specialty market niches and the demand for local and ethnic food and nontraditional products, while promoting agricultural tourism and education," says Kerry Engel, agri-food specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Ag Entrepreneurship Unit, Westlock.

***Explore Direct 2003*** is the second province-wide direct marketing conference to be held in Alberta.

Conference highlights include:

- a full day workshop on *Innovative Merchandizing* with merchandizing guru, John Stanley
- two keynote addresses: *Building an Image* with John Stanley and *Tracking Trends* with Jim Hole
- 14 select-a-session opportunities dealing with direct marketing meat, marketing, new ideas and planning for change

For further information or a program and registration package, call (780) 679-1362 (toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000). Information is also available on the internet at Alberta Agriculture's web site <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/diversify>.

*Contact: Kerry Engel*
*(780) 349-4466*
*Cell: (780) 349-9017*

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# Agri-News Briefs

## Water seminar series

The Alberta Society of Professional Biologists (ASPB), the Canadian Water Resources Association (CWRA) and the Water Resources Centre at the University of Alberta are offering a seminar series entitled ***Alberta's Water for Life: Water Strategy***. Alberta is developing a comprehensive strategy to identify short-, medium- and long-term plans to manage the quantity and quality of the provincial water systems and supply. The seminar series will address Alberta's water challenges and look at ways of dealing with future water-related issues. The seminar series will share a summary of the public consultation ***Forum on Water*** and encourage discussion of how to implement recommendations for provincial water challenges. The next two parts of the seminar series will be held on October 29 and November 26, 2002, at the University of Alberta, Room 129, Education Building, 87 Avenue, between 112 and 114 Street, Edmonton. The series is free of charge. Literature about membership to the ASPB and the CWRA will also be available. For further information, contact Stacey Schaub-Szabo at (780) 450-5360, e-mail <szabo@arc.ab.ca>, or visit the ASPB web site at <www.aspb.ab.ca>.

## Managing Stressful Times

A new pamphlet that features the warning signs of stress is now available. The Alberta Mental Health Board Help Line number, 1-877-303-AMHB (2642), is also prominently featured in this pamphlet. Copies of this information piece are available for use at seminars, meetings, and conferences. ***Managing Stressful Time*** was produced by the Alberta Mental Health Board (AMHB) in cooperation with the Farmers' Advocate and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Communications and Human Resources branches. For copies, contact AMHB at 1-877-333-2642. The pamphlet can be downloaded directly from the internet <http://www.amhb.ab.ca/16207_StressBrch.pdf>.

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Agri-News

October 14, 2002

## Guide for CFOs, seasonal feeding and bedding sites

Livestock producers, municipalities and Albertans have a new information tool to help them better understand and implement recent amendments to the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act* (AOPA). The changes to AOPA lay a foundation for environmental standards in the province's livestock industry and enhance the approval process for Confined Feeding Operations (CFOs). The new 16-page ***Reference Guide: Agricultural Operation Practices Act*** outlines the regulations and producers' new responsibilities under AOPA.

"Amendments to AOPA set new standards for environmental management of Alberta's livestock industry," says Louise Starling, head of the Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's environmental and livestock welfare branch. "It's our goal to help producers, municipalities and the public understand and implement the new standards defined in the legislation."

The Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) administers AOPA, including a one-window process for siting and approval of applications for new and expanding CFOs. The NRCB is also responsible for monitoring and enforcing compliance with province-wide standards and permit conditions in NRCB approvals and existing municipal permits. Oriented towards producers, the new guide leads readers through the legislation Key points include:

- nuisance provisions related to odour, noise, dust, smoke and other disturbances resulting from agricultural operations
- siting of livestock production facilities to minimize nuisance and protect the environment
- approval, registration and authorization required
- manure storage standards for all livestock production including CFOs and anyone who handles or stores manure
- seasonal feeding and bedding site management
- application of livestock manure, including record keeping
- soil nutrient levels for all livestock producers and other manure users
- protection of surface and ground water
- transitional provisions and change of ownership for existing CFOs
- compliance monitoring and enforcement

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## This Week

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

- role of the NRCB, Alberta Agriculture, the Farmers' Advocate of Alberta and municipalities

The new ***Reference Guide: Agricultural Operation Practices Act*** is available on the internet and in print. To view or download the guide, go to Alberta Agriculture's web site <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/livestock/cfo/guide.html>. For a printed copy of the Guide, contact Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office at 1-800-292-5697.

Copies of the Guide are also available from industry associations and NRCB regional offices in:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Lethbridge* | *(403) 381-5166* |
| *Red Deer* | *(403) 340-5241* |
| *Barrhead* | *(780) 674-8303 and* |
| *Fairview* | *(780) 835-7111* |

*Contact: Louise Starling*
*(403) 340-5306*

# Managing through drought

Drought and its effects on agriculture in Alberta, is uppermost in the minds of many people in the province. **Managing Through Drought** is the theme of the upcoming annual ***Thinking About Strategies Speaking Series***, organized by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

"***Thinking About Strategies*** is a series of one day events that focuses on relevant management issues in Agriculture," says Dann Mattson, Alberta Agriculture's agricultural management specialist in Olds. "This year we are pleased to feature Dr. Tim Ball and David Pratt. Ball is a climatologist from Victoria, BC and will speak on weather trends past, present and future. Pratt, from Fairfield California, owns Ranch Management Consultants and teaches the Ranching for Profit School. He will address drought management and risk proofing your business."

"Talking about drought is extremely useful, because drought is just one of many risks that producers face," explains Pratt. "We use drought as a vehicle to teach people how to manage other types of risk in their business as well." Pratt uses a two-prong approach to risk management; one focuses on how to risk proof a business and the other on how to actually deal with the event once it occurs.

"Drought affects land, animals, money and people, and those four components are key considerations in both risk proofing a business and are factors that should be considered when creating a response plan," says Pratt.

These four components, with the exception of animals, apply to any agriculture business. Drought is a natural occurring phenomenon, but some areas are more prone to drought risk than others. Pratt will discuss several drought-proofing strategies that can be implemented from both a land and animal standpoint.

When it comes to money, many people think that income is going to go down during drought; however, in the first year of drought it's the exact opposite. "In the first year of a drought, you are likely de-stocking or selling capital assets, which means all of a sudden you have capital," says Pratt. "Therefore, you need some sort of plan to preserve that capital and put it into something that will generate cash flow so when the money is needed to buy back in, it will be there."

Pratt will explain that one of the big tricks is to recognize early on that you are in trouble, because the earlier you sell, the higher prices will be. There is a date on just about every property that is the point where if it hasn't rained by that time or there hasn't been significant growth, a producer knows they are in trouble. This point is called the critical date, and it's the date on which to pull the trigger on a drought plan. Pratt will discuss several tools that can be used to help develop this plan, and provide examples of successes.

People are the other key component. "Drought tends to immobilize people for a lot of reasons. However, if people understand that drought is normal and develop a plan and the capability to initiate that plan, they are better able to deal with drought," says Pratt. "Most agricultural producers live inside their business. What they do becomes who they are. Their business is their life. Therefore when the business takes a hit, such as depressed markets or drought, it becomes not just an attack on the business, it becomes a personal attack."

Pratt will help people step outside their business and take an objective look at their operation, their opportunities and challenges and help them develop strategies and a plan to risk proof their business and manage through drought.

The ***Thinking About Strategies*** series will be held on:

| | |
|---|---|
| *December 10, 2002* | *Olds* |
| *December 11, 2002* | *Camrose* |
| *December 12, 2002* | *Westlock* |

The registration cost is $50 per person and includes lunch and coffee. Each day's agenda runs from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. For participants of the Competitive Advantage Program for Agriculture (CAPA) which runs concurrently at Olds College, the December 10 meeting is included as part of the CAPA 12-day intensive business management program.

For more information about ***Thinking About Strategies Speaking Series*** in Olds, or the CAPA program, call the Business and Innovation Branch at (403) 556-4240.
For information on the Camrose meeting call (780) 672-3640 and for the Westlock meeting call (780) 349-0300. In Alberta, dial 310-0000 for toll-free access.

*Contact: Dann Mattson*
*(403) 556-4248*
*e-mail: <dann.mattson@gov.ab.ca>*

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## Special Crops Directory

The increase in special crops and alternative crops being grown in Alberta has increased significantly over the last several years. As one of its final accomplishments, the disbanded Special Crops Product Team of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, in cooperation with the Farm Business Management Program have completed and published the ***Special Crops Directory 2002***.

The Directory makes an excellent reference guide for producers already involved in growing special crops or producers considering growing any of these crop alternatives. Organized into three sections, the layout of the Directory makes it easy to find industry contacts for specific crops.

**Alphabetic List of Special Crops** – is a simple list of the various special crops that are currently grown in Alberta

**Special Crops and Related Functions List** – gives the names of contractors, dealers, exporters, consultants, associations, commissions, brokers and biological product companies that are associated with each particular special crop

**Alphabetic List of Industry Participants** – gives the address, telephone number, e-mail address and web address of all industries, commissions and associations listed in the Directory.

The ***Special Crops Directory 2002*** is available free of charge from Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office, 7000 – 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, or by calling toll free in Alberta 1-800-292-5697.

The Directory is also available on the internet at: <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/crops/special/directory/index.html>.

*Contact* *Alberta Agriculture*
*Publications Office*
*(780) 427-0391, Edmonton*
*1-800-292-5697*

## New apple cultivars for the prairies

The University of Saskatchewan's domestic fruit program has developed several new breeding lines of apples for western Canada. These cultivars are very winter hardy apples and have the potential to compete with established commercial varieties sold at supermarkets. These are medium to large-sized apples, light green, yellow or reddish in colour. They are firm, juicy, resistant to oxidation and store well. Their excellent flavour makes them first class fresh or juicing apples

"These new apple cultivars are the result of a breeding program founded in the 1920s. The current generation of selections started in the mid-60s with 30,297 original seedlings largely derived from cultivars such as Heyer, McIntosh, Ben Davis, and Malinda," says Chris Neeser, fruit and vegetable specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South, Brooks. "Initially, the breeding effort focused on hardiness and fruit size. Current advanced selections have a strong component of their gene pool from Brookland, Haralson and several Russian cultivars. The most promising of these advanced lines are available to growers who wish to participate in a testing program."

Some of these new cultivars may soon be released for commercial propagation. This will be very welcome news for the fledgling prairie apple industry. At this time there are no commercial apple orchards in Alberta; however, there are a number of interested individuals.

"Although growing apples in Alberta is challenging, the prairie climate has some significant advantages," adds Neeser. "Because of Alberta's dry climate and the fact that apples are not commonly grown, the province has very few disease or insect problems. This means a reduction in production costs and it greatly facilitates production of certified organic apples. The market for organic fresh and processed apples, including apple juice, is excellent and expected to grow."

Growers interested in participating in the test program are encouraged to e-mail Bob Bors <bob.bors@usask.ca> or Rick Saswatzky <rsawatzky@sk.sympatico.ca> or contact Bors by phone at (306) 978-8316 or (306) 966-8583 at the Department of Plant Sciences, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 5A8. They have a web site under construction that will soon provide program information: <http://www.usask.ca/agriculture/plantsci/dom_fruit/index.html>.

Bors will be speaking at the Alberta Hort Congress being held in Edmonton on November 14 and 15, 2002. Further information about the Congress is posted on the Congress web site at <www.albertahortcongress.com>. To be added to the Congress mailing list, call (780) 415-2324 and leave your name and address.

*Contact:* *Chris Neeser*
*(403) 362-1331*

## Ag-tourism – an Alberta adventure

A recent visit to Alberta by Ed Mahoney, extension agent at Michigan State University, gave ag-tourism operators something to be proud of. Mahoney complimented operators for their emphasis on family history, authenticity and true western heritage. He also made several observations and comments that provided food for thought on enhancing marketing and individual operations.

"Over a two-week stay, Mahoney and his family experienced Alberta country vacations, guest ranches, farmers' markets and

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market gardens," says Linda Hawk, industrial development officer with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's farm direct marketing initiative, ag-entrepreneurship division, Medicine Hat.

"I was impressed with the range of products offered here, and I believe there is huge potential for increased markets," says Mahoney. "Anyone who says that Wyoming, Colorado or Montana is the "real west" has never been to Alberta. My wife is definitely a Hawaiian holiday person, but after this trip, I know that we'll be back."

"Ag-tourism is a concept that developed naturally from the values of today's consumers," adds Hawk. "Many want to return to their roots, to a place and a lifestyle they remember. Others flock to Farmers' Markets to get a little closer to the product produced by farmers. It is also an opportunity to educate urban Albertans about the rural way of life. It's a way to provide guests with a chance to see the great investments in a farming operation; the cycle of planting, nurturing, harvesting; and, the process that food products take from the field to the fork."

Ag-tourism can take on many shapes and forms. Some choose to get involved in on-farm accommodations, such as bed & breakfast, cabins, or camping. Some prefer the recreational or educational side of ag-tourism, and get into farm tours, trail riding or pheasant hunting. Farm entertainment can also fit the bill with operations such as tea-houses, festivals or other entertainment events. Of course, direct sales of u-pick produce or value-added agricultural products are always a key component of any ag-tourism venture.

During his stay in Alberta, Mahoney met with several ag-tourism operators and event planners to discuss the future of the Alberta industry. Along with potential there comes issues that must be addressed before any significant growth can occur. "One of the key initiatives that Alberta tourism providers must think about is how to cross-market their products and services," Mahoney explains. "Local areas often have a variety of ag-tourism operations that have a good fit. For example, a bed & breakfast could serve saskatoons and fresh vegetables from the local market garden, decorate with native art by area artisans and provide discount certificates on behalf of a local western heritage museum."

If you are in the ag-tourism industry, or considering getting into the industry, research the local areas to find out what products and services are being offered and how you can compliment those. Discerning what values a new business can add to a total experience is a good place to start for any new ag-tourism venture. History, authenticity and western heritage are all values that are sought after by many.

For more information on ag-tourism and the upcoming ***Rural Tourism Conference***, contact Sharon Stollery at (780) 986-3514 or Bill Reynolds at (780) 427-4424. In Alberta, dial 310-0000 for toll-free access.

Information on ag-tourism is also available on the Alberta Agriculture web site at >www.agric.gov.ab.ca/diversify>.

| *Contact:* | *Linda Hawk* | *Kerry Engel* |
|---|---|---|
| | *(403) 528-5250* | *(780) 349-4466* |

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## Fall yard care

The sound of the geese flying southward in formation and the change in the leaf color are sure signs that fall is here. Spending some time in the yard now can pay big dividends next year.

"The tops of most of the herbaceous perennials can be cut off or left standing with the exception of peonies, iris and lilies where the tops have to be cut back," says Shelley Barkley, information officer at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South, Brooks. "There are pros and cons to leaving perennial tops intact over winter. The removal helps to prevent the overwintering of diseases and insects, while leaving this material can help to hold a snow cover during the winter and it can be attractive."

Newly planted perennials benefit from a mulch of clean material such as straw, or dry grass and leaves mixed together. Apply the mulch after the ground is frozen. Mulching in the fall will help to prevent the plants from being forced from the ground. To mark the plants that need to be moved or divided early in the spring, stake them now.

"Mulch strawberry patches when the temperature drops to -7°C and stays there for three or four nights," adds Barkley. "Water the plants well, then cover with weed-free straw or a grass and leaf mixture. Watering lightly after applying the mulch will help hold it in place. A mulch layer that is five centimetres deep after settling will keep the plants safe. Watch for signs of mice during the winter and treat as necessary."

The wintering of tea roses begins in the summer. For roses, fertilizing the plants should have stopped at the end of July, and in August, all roses with shorter stems should have been cut. Cut back the water in September, but never let the plants dry out. After several hard frosts, the winter insulation can be put in place. Water the rose plants well and head the canes back to 20-25 cm. Put about 30 cm of insulating material, such as peatmoss, compost or soil, around the canes and the crown, but do not pack the material too tightly.

"Cutting back on watering woody plants and perennials in August will aid these plants as they prepare for winter," says Barkley. "To prevent root damage during the winter, it's important to have a reserve of moisture in the root zone for all plants in the yard. Fill the soil profile with water in mid-October or just before the ground freezes."

Early fall is a good time for weed control in the lawn, also. Broad leaf herbicides for lawns applied on a warm day will control dandelions, chickweed and clover. Keep mowing the lawn as

*Cont'd on page 5*

long as the grass continues to grow. To prevent damage to the crown of the grass, cut the lawn five to six centimetres long.

Raking fallen leaves tidies the yard and removes overwintering sites for many insects and diseases. The dried leaves can be stock piled for adding to next year's compost pile.

Since winter can fade the memories of the summer, make a few notes for next year, what worked, what did not and what to try for next year.

Local Garden Centres can provide additional information for gardeners. Also, information on yard, garden, turf, shrub and tree care is included in the Alberta Agriculture publication, ***Alberta Yards and Gardens: What to Grow***. This book gives information to help Albertans successfully grow ornamental trees and shrubs, small fruits and berries, flowers, vegetables, herbs and water plants. Cost of this publication is $15 (plus GST). Copies are available at the Alberta Agriculture Publications Office, 7000 – 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, or by calling toll free 1-800-292-5697. Please include $2 (plus GST) for shipping and handling. VISA and MasterCard are accepted.

*Contact: Shelley Barkley*
*(403) 362-1308*

*Alberta Agriculture*
*Publications Office*
*1-800-292-5697*

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## Alberta 4-H enthusiasts recognized for Queen's Jubilee

The Queen's Jubilee marks the 50th anniversary of her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's accession to the throne. One of the most significant activities of the Golden Jubilee celebrations is the awarding of the Golden Jubilee Medal. This commemorative medal will be awarded to Canadians who, over the past 50 years, have helped create the Canada of today, including young Canadians who are actively contributing to the future

This program is an opportunity to recognize citizens for an outstanding and exemplary achievement or service to their community or to Canada as a whole. In keeping with the Golden Jubilee spirit endorsed by the Queen, awarding of the medal will be inclusive and wide-ranging. A total of 46,000 medals have been struck with 100 medals being awarded to 4-H enthusiasts across Canada

Alberta 4-H is pleased to announce the following recipients from the province:

**Dorothy Rigney** – is a past 4-H leader and council member who undertook the challenge of establishing the 4-H Foundation of Alberta. She had a vision and a goal to establish a campsite where Alberta 4-H members from across the province could gather. Her efforts have resulted in the purchase of land and the development of the Alberta 4-H Centre. Rigney inspired others to follow her dream, and her dream continues to inspire others every day.

**Doug Norman** – worked with the Alberta 4-H program as a Regional 4-H Specialist for over 25 years until a health condition forced him to retire. He initiated numerous events in his region, and was a role model for staff and leaders. Norman empowered members to always do their best in whatever program or project they undertook, was never restrained by protocol and encouraged membership by searching for new and innovative ways to offer the 4-H program.

**Milo Barfuss** – worked with the Alberta 4-H program as a Regional 4-H Specialist for over 35 years. Throughout his years of service, he always went the extra mile to help 4-H members and leaders achieve success in the program. He used his leadership skills to present initiatives, kept in mind the best interests of 4-H members and always made sure others were recognized for their accomplishments.

**Tim Bowman** – is a past 4-H member and current 4-H Alumni who lives the 4-H motto in whatever he does. Through his innovation and dedication, he keeps 4-H alumni informed of the program, volunteers his time to 4-H across the province and is always willing to promote the program. Bowman is currently an active member of the 4-H Foundation of Alberta and truly represents the future of 4-H in the province.

*Contact Mark Muchka*
*Alberta Agriculture*
*4-H specialist - communications and marketing*
*(780) 427-0753*

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# Agri-News Briefs

## Farm safety coordinator

As the new Farm Safety Coordinator for Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Laurel Aitken is excited about taking on the challenge of getting important farm safety information out to farmers across Alberta. "One of my goals is to work very closely with farm and community groups who can help to spread the farm safety message to their members," she says. Over the next few months, Aitken will be contacting community groups, including Agricultural Societies, 4-H Clubs and community service agencies to discuss farm safety and find areas where they can work together to improve farm safety in Alberta. Since taking on the new position in June, Aitken has been looking at ways to improve the information available to farmers on the Alberta Agriculture internet site. "There is a lot of excellent information available on the internet already. Our challenge is to make safety information easily accessible to Alberta farmers who don't have the time to surf the web looking for what they need," she adds. A new page is being added to Alberta Agriculture's farm safety page that will link to related sites. Farmers can check the site at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca> by clicking on *Rural Development* and then *Farm Safety*. Aitken is located in Edmonton and can be reached at (780) 427-4231.

## Provincial apiculturist appointed

Dr. Medhat Nasr has been appointed the new provincial apiculturist. Nasr brings to the position several years of service to the beekeeping industry in California, Ontario and New Jersey. His most recent position was extension specialist in apiculture with the Blueberry-Cranberry Research and Extension Center, Rutgers University, State of New Jersey, U.S. As provincial apiculturist for Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Nasr's role will be to provide leadership to Alberta's beekeeping industry through extension, technology transfer and regulatory services to the beekeepers of Alberta. Nasr began working as Alberta's provincial apiculturist on September 16, 2002 at the Crop Diversification Centre North, Edmonton. He can be reached at (780) 415-2314.

## Corn trial open house

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, University of Alberta, Alberta Cattle Commission and industry are completing a feeding trial at the Kinsella Ranch. The trial evaluates reduced intake diets and corn grain in rations. Early results show great promise with rations that rely on half the traditional roughage needs. An open house has been planned for October 24, 2002 from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. at the Kinsella Ranch. Producers are welcome to attend, see the trial cows and receive research information on how to feed cows with less forage. The event is scheduled for the last day of the trial and highlights the final results. For further information, contact Trevor Yurchak, beef specialist with Alberta Agriculture, (780) 675-8219.

## Seminar on wills and farm succession planning

The succession seminars offered this year by Farm Estate Advisory Group and Alberta Agriculture feature local professionals to address specific business and family concerns. Speakers at each seminar will include an area accountant, lawyer and an estate advisor. The local specialists will answer questions and address issues such as: minimizing taxes at death, roll-overs and the capital gains exemption; the different options on how to be fair with non-participating children; having to partner with unwanted siblings, in-laws, or spouses of deceased partners; ways to manage inheritances even posthumously, for example - taking care of handicapped individuals; how to communicate with family/partners so there is business and family harmony before and after the head of the business slows down, retires or dies; and, how to know if lawyers, accountants and advisors are working for your benefit.

| ***Date*** | ***Time*** | ***Location*** |
|---|---|---|
| *November 13* | *7:00 p.m.* | *Buck Lake* |
| *November 19* | *7:00 p.m.* | *Cold Lake* |
| *November 21* | *7:00 p.m.* | *Lakedell* |
| *November 27* | *7:00 p.m.* | *Bashaw* |

For seminar details, contact the local Ag Society or Richard Baker, (780) 487-5202. Information is also available on the internet at <www.estateadvisors.org>. The price of admission varies with each location. Check the web site for the registration cost of the seminar closest to you. Additional seminars will be held during the year, dates to be announced as they are confirmed.

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# Agri-News

October 21, 2002

## *Meeting the threat of* Fusarium graminearum *in Alberta*

*Fusarium graminearum* is the causal agent of fusarium head blight, the most destructive disease of wheat and barley in Canada. The associated production of mycotoxins, particularly DON (vomitoxin), by this pathogen significantly limits the use of affected grain and poses a health risk to animals that consume grain containing DON.

"*F. graminearum* is firmly established in Manitoba and south eastern Saskatchewan and represents a serious threat to Alberta," says Jim Calpas, provincial integrated pest management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Pest Risk Management Unit, Edmonton. "The province of Alberta is virtually free of *F. graminearum* and we certainly don't want this pathogen to become established in the province. There is no doubt that *F. graminearum* would thrive under Alberta's climate, any belief to the contrary is wishful thinking at best."

The **Alberta *Fusarium graminearum* Management Plan**, which came into effect October 1, 2002, specifies the provincial strategy for meeting the threat of this devastating disease while sustaining all sectors of the agriculture industry in Alberta. The control strategies in this plan are enforced under the authority of the *Alberta Agricultural Pests Act*.

"The long-term goal of the Management Plan is to prevent the introduction and establishment of *F. graminearum* in Alberta until effective disease control measures for this pathogen are developed," adds Calpas. "It is expected that the most effective control of this disease will involve the development of resistant wheat and barley cultivars."

The prevention and control strategies presented in the Management Plan address the most likely avenues of introducing *F. graminearum* into Alberta fields according to the level of associated risk. There is a zero tolerance for *F. graminearum* in seed grain, including corn, because one of the surest ways to introduce and establish this pathogen in a field is to plant diseased seed. The testing requirements for all Alberta seed, including common seed, is an important part of the disease control strategy.

"Seed produced in Alberta represents a relatively low risk as Alberta is essentially free of *F. graminearum*," says Calpas. "However, it's important to be vigilant against the introduction of *F. graminearum* in our fields. Seed testing requirements will allow provincial producers and authorities to monitor and

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catch low-level infestations early, before they get out of control.

Focusing entirely on seed produced outside of the province ignores the real possibility of low-level infections becoming established and spreading. Testing of Alberta produced cereal seed represents an important early warning component of *F. graminearum* control."

All imported cereal seed must be treated with a fungicide seed treatment that is effective against species of Fusarium. This adds another level of protection against the possibility of low-level infections in seed lots that test negative for the pathogen. It's highly recommended, but not required, that all seed produced in Alberta also be treated with a fungicide.

"Feed grain represents a risk for introducing *F. graminearum* due to the sheer volume of feed grain that is brought into this province," continues Calpas. "The Management Plan recognizes this risk and requires that feed grain be handled responsibly in accordance with a number of best management practices. The key components of the best management practices are to ensure that infected grain is fed only to cattle as *F. graminearum* on infected grain is killed as it passes through a cow's digestive system, that spillage is avoided and that any spilled grain cleaned up and composted. Composting infected grain or crop residue, such as grass hay or straw, to reach a temperature of 60 to 70 degrees C for two weeks will also kill any *F. graminearum* that is present in the grain or crop residue."

To keep *F. graminearum* from establishing in roadsides or fields, it is imperative that infected grain not be allowed to come in contact with soil. Unloading sites must be covered or equipped with drop socks and wind fences to ensure that grain does not blow onto adjacent soil. Trucks or other vehicles used to haul feed grain must be securely tarped. Trucks must be thoroughly cleaned at the unloading site and all remaining grain composted. Feed grain cannot be stored in direct contact with the soil, nor can it be uncovered. Moisture contacting infected grain can promote the growth and development of *F. graminearum*.

"It is recommended that producers buy Fusarium-free grain as this greatly reduces the risk of introducing the pathogen," says Calpas. "Recent experience has shown that this feed grain has been available to those who have insisted on grain that is free of *F. graminearum*."

Grass hay and straw from areas that are infested with *F. graminearum* can also carry the pathogen and should be handled in accordance with the best management practices for feed grain.

"Grass hay represents less of a risk than straw," says Calpas. "This is because it should all go through the cow, which kills any *F. graminearum* that is present. Bedding straw represents a very high risk of spreading *F. graminearum* because imported straw will very likely have high levels of infection and the practice of spreading bedding straw in fields can bring the pathogen in direct contact with the soil. If the bedding straw is not collected and composted in early spring any *F. graminearum* that is present is in an excellent position to establish in the field."

The last line of defense occurs when *F. graminearum* infections are identified in cereal fields. This occurrence triggers an eradication strategy where the crop is immediately ensiled or harvested and the residue carefully managed and cultivated. The field is taken out of cereal production for three years to allow the crop residue to degrade, which results in the eradication of the pathogen. *Fusarium graminearum* does not survive in fields where the host material has degraded and is no longer present. Experience has shown that it is possible to eradicate this pathogen from a field where it has begun to establish. Swift action is required and the strategy will only be effective if only if a few fields become infected. Attempts to eradicate *F. graminearum* from a large number of infected fields over a wide area will not likely be successful.

"The success of Alberta's ***Fusarium graminearum* Management Plan** depends on the effective participation of all players in Alberta's agriculture industry," adds Calpas. "Any inconvenience or temporary hardship cause by complying with the control measures is a small price to pay when compared to the long-term grief and loss that will be associated with an established *F. graminearum* problem."

*Contact: Jim Calpas*
*(780) 422-4911*

## Pros and cons of fall-applied nitrogen

"When it comes to the relative effectiveness of fall versus spring nitrogen (N) fertilizer applications, fall fertilization can range from very effective to disastrous depending on soil moisture, the form of nitrogen used and how it is applied," says Ross H. McKenzie, senior research scientist at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre, Brooks. "To understand why this is the case, it's imperative to understand the fate of fertilizer N in soil."

Fertilizer N is applied to soil in the form of urea ($CO(NH_2)_2$), anhydrous ammonia ($NH_3$), ammonium ($NH_4^+$), or nitrate ($NO_3^-$) depending on the product used. Urea and anhydrous ammonia quickly convert to ammonium. It is the ammonium and nitrate forms that are taken up by plants. If the soil is warm, moist and well aerated, ammonium is rapidly oxidized to nitrate through the nitrification process. This is a biological process performed by highly specialized soil bacteria.

"Banding slows the nitrification process by creating an environment near the band that inhibits the activity of the bacteria converting ammonium to nitrate," explains McKenzie.

Cont'd on page 3

"Therefore, if urea or anhydrous ammonia is banded in late fall, most of the N is retained in the ammonium form until the soil warms up in the spring. If the fertilizer is broadcast or banded in early fall, likely most of the ammonium will be converted to nitrate prior to freeze-up, large losses can occur when soils are water saturated during and just after snow melt in early spring. The losses are caused by an anaerobic process called denitrification which converts nitrate to nitrogen and oxygen gases."

"Research has also shown that denitrification will occur in virtually all of our agricultural soils," says Douglas Penney, applied research specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton. "This is not surprising since denitrification is not a particularly specialized function. Many different types of soil bacteria use denitrification as an alternative form of respiration when oxygen is in short supply."

What this means in terms of fertilizer management is that no soil type or region of the province is 100 per cent safe when it comes to losses of fall-applied N. The risk of overwinter N loss is highest in regions with very moist climates, such as west central Alberta. There is less risk in regions that tend to be drier such as southeastern Alberta, but even in these regions N losses can be high during a wet spring, such as this year. In general however, as shown in the following table, N losses through denitrification in the drier regions are normally small, and fall banded N is equal to spring banded N. In cases where spring banding causes a significant loss of seedbed moisture, fall banding can be superior to spring banding.

"Keep in mind that denitrifying bacteria are extremely small, less than 2-millonths of a meter in size. Regional climate or moisture level during a given spring is immaterial," adds Penney. "These bacteria only respond to what is happening in their tiny corner of your field. This means that micro-climate is also important. Even during dry springs, there are localized wet areas, such as depressions where denitrification can occur. Producers should keep this in mind when think about their fields. Most fields are not uniformly flat and well drained.

There are always spots that are wetter than the rest, areas where runoff accumulates after a rain or spring snow melt. Over winter N losses can vary greatly over a short distance. Fall-applied N can be very effective on upland and totally ineffective in a depression just a short distance away."

It is important to remember fall-application always puts your fertilizer N at risk. The level of risk is generally assessed at the regional level, but whether or not losses occur is a function of very local conditions.

Before discussing management recommendations, consider these general rules about application methods and timing:

- generally spring banded is the most effective method of application and fall broadcast the least effective
- fall banded N will be as effective as spring banded if there is no extended period of saturation in the spring
- fall banded N may be more effective than spring banded when lack of seedbed moisture is a concern

## Fall-Applied N as a Percent of Spring Broadcast and Incorporated

| | Soil Climate Categories | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Application Method** | Dry | Medium | Wet | Irrigated |
| Spring Broadcast and Incorp | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Spring Banded | 120 | 110 | 105 | 110 |
| Fall Broadcast and Incorp | 90 | 75 | 65 | 95 |
| Fall Banded | 120 | 110 | 85 | 110 |

**Dry** - well drained soils which are seldom saturated during spring thaw.
**Medium** - well to moderately drained soils that are occasionally saturated during spring thaw for short periods.
**Wet** - poorly to moderately drained soils that are saturated for extended periods during spring thaw.
**Irrigated** - well drained soils in southern Alberta that are seldom saturated during spring thaw
(Source: Agdex 542-7)

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With this information in mind here are a few tips to consider before you fertilize this fall:

- if soils tend to be saturated with water for extended periods in the spring, then fall –application is probably not a good option. However, if saturated soil conditions are normally not a problem, then you should get results from fall banding
- soil test to determine the optimum rates of fertilizer required. Producers are encouraged to sample 0 to 6-inch, 6 to 12-inch, and 12 to 24-inch depths to determine the cumulative N to two feet
- apply a conservative rate, such as 75 per cent of soil test recommendation, or 75 per cent of what you would expect to apply if the soil test results are not yet available at application time. This conservative fall rate is a hedge against high soil test N levels, or low spring moisture or low crop prices. If conditions look favorable come spring additional N can be drilled with the seed. Take note, however, that the amount of additional N that can be drilled with small seeded crops, canola for example, is only 10 pounds with a disk drill and 20 to 35 lbs. with an air seeder
- select a fertilizer formulation that is right for your specific conditions. Generally, under low risk conditions such as in southern Alberta, anhydrous ammonia (82-0-0), urea (46-0-0), ammonium nitrate (34-0-0), or liquid nitrogen (28-0-0) perform equally well when fall banded. However, soils in southern Alberta tend to be alkaline and losses through ammonia volatilization can occur if the bands are too shallow or the soil is dry and cloddy
- avoid the use of the nitrate containing products 34-0-0 and 28-0-0 on soils that tend to be saturated in the spring. Nitrates are subject to both denitrification and leaching losses under wet spring conditions
- apply N in late fall after the soil temperature has dropped below 7 degrees C and the nitrification process has slowed down
- band, don't broadcast. Banding restricts the contact between soil and fertilizer and as a result overwinter losses are lower

"As you can see there are a number of agronomic factors to consider before you go ahead and fall apply N," says McKenzie. "Producers may want to consult with a soil fertility specialist while setting up a fall fertilizer program."

Other management factors that should also be considered when deciding to fall fertilize:

- fall fertilization can improve your time management. By applying fall-fertilizer a field operation can be eliminated in the spring and allow earlier planting
- fertilizer prices and payment schedules tend to be more favorable in the fall, making it economical to fall apply
- availability of product and application equipment is often better in the fall than during the peak demand periods in spring
- soils tend to be drier in the fall, so N application equipment is less likely to cause soil compaction

"It is always a good idea to get several opinions and consider all the factors before you make your final decision," says Penney.

Alberta Agriculture's Ag-Info Center at 1-800-882-7677, fertilizer dealers, fertilizer industry agronomists and Alberta Agriculture extension agronomists the are excellent sources of information. Producers are encouraged to call these resources with any additional questions.

*Contact:* *Ross McKenzie*
*(403) 381-5842*
*Douglas Penney*
*(780) 422-1200*

## Standing tall with direct seeding

The shortening days and cool nights means trees will change When the reality of drought hits growers, there is at least one sure thing to remember – standing crop stubble offers the best possible chance for recovery.

"Years of studies from Agriculture Canada's Semiarid Prairie Agricultural Research Centre, near Swift Current, SK, indicate that spring wheat yields are better in tall stubble than cultivated or short stubble," says Ron Heller, agronomist of Reduced Tillage LINKAGES, Vermilion. "During these studies, the stubble height treatments were imposed immediately before spring seeding, thus all plots wintered under similar, undisturbed stubble conditions. The experiment was conducted over four years in an area where growers usually face two major limitations to grain production – lack of water and soil erosion – not unlike conditions for a good part of Alberta in 2002."

A report[1] on this study points out some interesting things for drought-stricken farmers to consider. The report discusses how standing stubble alters the in-crop microclimate of a field and provides a less stressful environment for plant growth.

Extensive measurements were collected to determine crop response to soil temperature, evaporation, solar radiation and other possible influences. There were no significant stubble treatment effects on plant population. Data analysis indicated that when averaged over the growing season, tall stubble of approximately 37 centimeters or 15 inches reduced evaporation rates by 25 per cent and short stubble, 16 centimeters or six inches by five per cent, compared to cultivated stubble.

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"The report further states that, of the two main yield components, increased kernel number was directly attributable to taller stubble treatments while kernel weight was independent of stubble height," continues Heller. "This points out the value of standing stubble for early plant development, prior to anthesis or flowering, chiefly related to superior water use efficiency."

Seeding into standing stubble provides a level of assurance that plant establishment and growth are being optimized. Stubble left standing in the fall will address problems associated with drought by protecting the soil from blowing winds and trapping snow for increased water infiltration in the following spring. Straight-cutting the crop can enhance the effort and reduced tillage practice such as direct seeding compliments it.

In practical terms, elimination of fall tillage operations should be a priority to maximize the snow-trap potential and reduce the risk of soil erosion. Also, any spring tillage should be restricted to low-disturbance fertilizer applications if required and seeding operations that result in minimal stubble knock down. Satisfactory performance can be achieved from narrow knife or angle-disc openers with on-row packing. The system requires a harvest management plan to adequately distribute or remove chaff and straw, which is not a problem when drought prevails, and may also entail the use of pre-seeding herbicides to control weeds that rob soil moisture and nutrients while competing with early emerging crops.

"Whether or not a prairie farmer believes in this departure from traditional cropping systems, if a bad situation gets worse, continued drought next year could result in less crop being seeded," says Heller. "Given that scenario, the practice of leaving stubble standing tall in the field will look like a smart move to protect the soil. Optimistically, stubble cover next spring will create an advantage for direct seeders."

For more information on direct seeding, residue management or a copy of the report, contact Heller at (780) 853-8262

***Stubble height effects on microclimate, yield and water use efficiency of spring wheat grown in a semiarid climate on the Canadian prairies*** - H.W Cutforth and B.G. McConkey, SPARC March 1997

*Contact:* *Ron Heller*
*(780) 853-8262*

# Canadian Wheat Board Director elections

This fall, elections for the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) Board of Directors will be held in five of the 10 CWB districts. All 'actual producers' of one of the six major grains (wheat, barley, oats, canola, flax, or rye) are eligible to vote. CWB permit book holders are automatically on the voters list. All other eligible producers needed to complete a Statutory Declaration by November 21, 2002 in order to be registered to vote. Only voters in the five voting districts are eligible to vote this year; producers in the other half of the districts will have the opportunity to vote in 2004.

Districts included in the 2002 vote include North, Northeastern and Southeastern Alberta.

Past CWB Election Results:

- 2000: 52 per cent of all votes cast were for candidates who favored a more open CWB, yet only one such director was elected.
- 1998: Again support was nearly 50 per cent for candidates favoring changes to the CWB, but in this election no such directors were elected.

"In a 2000 survey conducted by the Alberta Barley Commission (ABC), 11,000 farmers from across the Prairies were asked to respond to the following questions - Are you in favor of having the ability to sell your grain to any buyer, including the Canadian Wheat Board, in domestic and export markets? Or, do you support the current Canadian Wheat Board and its traditional monopoly?," comments Erin Holowach of the Alberta Grain Commission. "The voluntary option received 75 per cent support on a prairie-wide basis with Alberta having 81 per cent support for a voluntary marketing system.

Since the last election and the ABC survey, the debate between single-desk selling and marketing choice has become even more pronounced. The agriculture industry is rapidly changing and becoming increasingly competitive. Farmers need to carefully look at what sort of marketing system will enhance their farm gate returns and enable a sustainable industry and increased market outlets through an expanded value added sector."

Regardless of a producer's stand on this longstanding debate, it's important to be counted in the election, understand the issues and know the candidates in your district. Once you have decided what platform you support, the steps listed below should be followed when completing the preferential ballot. Producers should only rank the candidates that they support. This election is an opportunity for producers to elect a director that will represent them and continue to develop a wheat and barley marketing system for western Canada.

*cont'd on page 6*

**Don't 'Mark it With an X' in this election!** The CWB voting process is unusual because it uses a preferential ballot. Instead of an 'X', voter preferences are indicated with a number (1, 2, etc.) beside the candidates that are supported. This is not the standard voting procedure that many farmers are used to and confusion can arise in completing this ballot.

To avoid ballot rejection, farmers should follow these steps in preferential voting:

1. Mark '1' beside your first choice candidate
2. Mark '2' beside your second choice candidate
3. Do NOT rank every candidate – instead only vote for candidates you support
4. Don't use 'X' or 'O' to indicate your preference. This will result in a rejected ballot

When tabulating this election, if after the initial count no candidate has received a majority of first choice votes (50 per cent + 1), a second count will be conducted. In the second count, the last place candidate will be eliminated and have their votes reassigned, based on the second choice preference indicated on those ballots. This process will continue until one candidate has received the required 50 per cent plus one vote.

**Important Dates**

- November 3 – voters' packages mailed to farmers
- November 21 – deadline for submitting Statutory Declarations
- December 5 – postmark deadline for mailing completed ballots

*Contact:* *Meyers Norris Penny*
*Election Coordinator*
*www.cwbelection.com*
*1-800-446-0890*

*Alberta Ag Info Centre*
*1-866-882-7677*

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## Agricultural Hall of Fame inductees honoured

Three new inductees joined the ranks of the province's Agricultural Hall of Fame on October 11, 2002. The three Albertans were honoured for their significant contributions to agriculture and rural life in Alberta.

Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development commended this year's inductees for their extraordinary achievements in agriculture at a ceremony in Edmonton. "Their pioneering tenacity and leadership assisted in diversifying our agricultural industry," said McClellan. "They are helping to ensure a sustainable future for agriculture in our province."

This year's inductees were recognized for pioneering work in crop and livestock industry research and development. In addition to these achievements, each inductee has been active in leading the creation of industry associations and community development.

**Lud Prudek** from Bow Island was recognized for his leadership role in the initiating and developing dry bean pulse crops into a $100-million Canadian industry. As well, he made significant contributions to other specialty crops and pioneered gated pipe irrigation.

**Stan Price** from Acme led the development of vertically integrated food production from farm to consumer and is founder of the Sunterra Markets retail chain. Price pioneered the development of modern hog production practices, promoted the need for national grading standards and the development of value-added processing.

**Dr. James Helm's** work in the area of feed grain development led to the creation of 23 new varieties of barley and triticale, establishing Alberta's Field Crop Development Centre in Lacombe as a worldwide leader in scientific excellence, productivity and innovation in cereal breeding programs. Helm developed cost-effective, rapid whole grain sample analysis and was recognized for his significant contribution to the development of the Canada/Alberta Barley Agreement.

Created in 1951, the Agricultural Hall of Fame has recognized 111 men and women of Alberta who have made contributions that have significantly impacted Alberta's agricultural industry and rural community life. Each inductee has been an agricultural leader at the provincial, national or international level and has demonstrated leadership in farming, rural and/or commodity organizations, or in the food industry.

Hall of Fame candidates must be nominated by three people outside the candidate's immediate family. A selection committee, consisting of agricultural industry representatives, evaluates each submission based on the candidate's strong personal qualities as well as their significant contributions to agriculture and rural life.

Hall of Fame inductions take place bi-annually at an official ceremony hosted by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

For more information about the Alberta Agricultural Hall of Fame, visit the Alberta Agriculture web site at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/hall_of_fame/main.html>.

*Contact:* *Bard Haddrell*
*Executive director*
*Agricultural Information Division*
*(780) 427-5312*
*Dial 310-0000 for toll free access*

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# Agri-News Briefs

## New generation co-ops seminar

A technical seminar, New Generation Co-ops, Alberta's Newest Option for Agriculture Business, is being held at the Coast Terrace Inn, Edmonton on December 3 and 4, 2002. The seminar will provide information on new generation co-ops (NGCs), what they are, how they work, how they differ from other co-ops. The keynote speaker, Bill Patrie of Mandan, North Dakota, will discuss the success of NGCs in the U.S. and how to organize and develop an NGC. Technical information regarding set-up, financing and management of NGCs rounds out the agenda. The registration deadline for the seminar is November 22, 2002. For additional registration information, contact one of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's risk management specialists: Ted Darling in Airdrie, (403) 948-8524; Merle Good in Olds (403) 555-4237; Graham Gilchrist in Vegreville (780) 632-5417; or, Linda Hawk, with Alberta Agriculture's agri-preneure action unit, in Medicine Hat (403) 528-5250. Complete information about the seminar is also posted on the internet at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/ecomonic mgmt/diversification/ngc.html>.

## Agronomy Update 2003

The ***Agronomy Update - 2003 Conference*** is being held at the Lethbridge Lodge Hotel, Lethbridge, on January 13 and 14, 2003. The conference focuses on forage production, nutrient management, crop management, environmental issues, entomology concerns, crop health and pathology, and weeds and herbicides. Invited speakers will give 30 presentations over the two days. At the trade show portion of the conference, several booths and displays will also be available for viewing. A detailed agenda will be sent out in early November 2002. For more information on or to be put on a mailing list for Agronomy Update - 2003, contact Ross McKenzie at (403) 381-5842 or Rob Dunn at (403) 381-5351.

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# Agri-News

October 28, 2002

## Bioassay an important tool following a drought year

Residue from herbicides put down in 2002, and in some cases in previous years, could present another problem to producers in 2003. Most herbicides need moisture for chemical or microbial breakdown. The dry conditions experienced throughout most of Alberta this past growing season can mean far lower than expected rates of herbicide breakdown in cropland.

"Some herbicides that were applied in 2002 or previously have not broken down completely," says Keith Topinka, extension agronomist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "The remaining herbicide may produce damage symptoms in some crops. Higher levels of residue are more likely to occur in areas that have experienced one or more years of dry conditions, and that's a pretty good description of the weather in Alberta for the last two years."

To ensure growers don't have problems in 2003 they should:

- **Read the label** – the recropping section on each herbicide's label, or found in Alberta Agriculture's Crop Protection 2002 publication, gives information on what crops can be grown safely following application. Other labeled restrictions for these herbicides, such as organic matter and soil pH should also be noted
- **Follow the label** – the instructions on the label state which crops are sensitive to the herbicide. Knowing that residue levels are likely higher than expected, producers can get an idea of what crops would be more or less tolerant
- **Consider having a bioassay done on the soil** – the Alberta Research Council in Vegreville will grow the crop planned for next year in a soil sample provided by the producer and compare it to the same crop grown in safe soil

"Knowing exactly what residue is left in the soil is extremely important before spring planting decisions are made," adds Topinka. "The ARC bioassay testing service, which costs $75, is something that growers should consider using if they have concerns. The process takes five weeks, after which time ARC sends a letter to the producer describing any damage observed. They also include photos comparing growth of the crop in the two different soils so the producer can see exactly how the cropland soil performed."

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## This Week

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AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

When taking soil samples for a bioassay, remember:

- bioassays done in a qualified lab can help producers reduce the risk to their crop the following year
- soil sampling is critical to getting a good answer
- sample shallow, between 0 to 4 inches (0 to 10 cm), as that's where the herbicide is
- sample hills and low spots separately and get them tested separately. An average sample may be misleading
- soil sample this fall. Five weeks are needed for the testing, so it's not something producers should leave until spring
- ARC will not give recommendations, but they give information that will help in making recropping decisions

"Crop specialists are expecting some symptoms of herbicide residue to show up in 2003," says Topinka. "It is important to note that symptoms may or may not result in a yield or quality reduction. For peace of mind, a producer can avoid the symptoms altogether by following the labels, seeding tolerant crops and testing if unsure. Good spring moisture in 2003 won't eliminate herbicide risk because there isn't enough time in the spring, especially with cool soils, for herbicides to break down before seeding."

There are several considerations producers have to keep in mind especially when following a drought year. Chemical residue levels in Alberta cropland is one more factor that needs to be kept in mind. To have your soil tested for herbicide residue, contact Sandi Checkel at the Alberta Research Council, (780) 632-8217.

For further information on herbicide residue, soil testing and soil sampling, contact the Alberta Ag-Info Centre at 1-866-882-7677.

*Contact:* *Alberta Ag-Info Centre*
*1-866-882-7677*
*Alberta Research Council*
*(780) 632-8217*

## Soil testing to check your soil nutrient account

Soil testing is important every year, and maybe more so this year. Soil tests provide the information needed to determine optimum fertilizer rates, plan a fertilizer program and improve profitability.

"Depending on field size and sampling depths, it is estimated that soil sampling costs $0.20 to $0.40 per acre," says Len Kryzanowski, crop nutrition agronomist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre North, Edmonton. "Soil testing should be viewed as a sound investment. Considering the size of investment in fertilizer inputs, a soil test is a critical part of managing that fertilizer investment to its fullest.

"Just like a bank account, when you want to make a withdrawal you need to know what is in the account. The same is true for soil nutrients. Before you grow that next crop, you need to know what is in the soil and how much fertilizer is needed before making a nutrient withdrawal with the crop next year."

Soil testing is likely more important this year because of the abnormal growing conditions in 2002. The drought in some areas of the province and excess water in other areas will have a significant effect on soil nutrient levels.

In southern Alberta, higher than normal rains during the summer presented farmers with the obvious problems of flooding and with one problem that may be overlooked – the effects on soil fertility.

"Heavy precipitation can leach mobile nutrients, such as nitrogen (N) and sulfur (S) into the ground to depths beyond the reach of plants," says Kryzanowski. "This is more of a problem on coarse textured soils or the good irrigation areas, but also happens to some extent in all soils. On heavier soils, excess water can lead to saturated soil conditions that can lead to denitrification. This is something that is not usually a problem in southern Alberta, but denitrification has been a considerable problem in some southern areas this year. Denitrification is the process where soil bacteria use nitrate instead of oxygen to 'breathe' resulting in nitrogen being converted to atmospheric nitrogen and being lost from the soil."

For most of the province, drought was the major culprit limiting crop production in 2002. The drought stressed crops did not use soil nutrients to the same extent that they normally would. This can lead to nutrients being left in the soil for next year's crops. How much of the nutrient bank is left can only be accurately determined by soil testing.

"What this fall will bring in the way of soil test results is difficult to predict," adds Roger Andreiuk, Norwest Labs. "In southern Alberta, soil nitrogen levels may be low due to the wet summer season where there was good plant growth that used nutrients as well as nutrients leached from wet soils. In much of central and northern Alberta, soil N levels may be higher than usual due to drought conditions. In all of these areas, however, not every field is the same. Many fields in the drought areas experienced second growth of the crop in late August to early September when late rains fell. So even if the intended crop did not remove many nutrients, the unintended second growth likely used soil nutrients."

An important point to keep in mind is sampling depth. The correct depth to sample depends on the reason for soil testing. A surface sample (0 to 6 inches) is usually adequate for phosphorus, potassium, pH, micronutrients and organic matter. Deeper depths are better for nitrogen and sulphur, as these nutrients are highly mobile in the soil. In areas suffering from drought, much of the applied nitrogen may be stranded

*Cont'd on page 3*

in the surface depth. If only the surface is sampled, the estimate of available N down to 24 inches will be an overestimate. Similarly, in wet areas where leaching of nutrients could have occurred, a surface sample alone may result in an underestimation of available N. In both instances, sampling deeper one sample from 6 to 12 inches and another from 12 to 24 inches, will give a more accurate measure of available N.

"As always, keep field and soil variability in mind when soil sampling," says Kryzanowski. "Be sure to take samples that represent the field or at least the majority of the field. Consider benchmark sampling as a way of achieving consistency from year to year."

Soil testing is a worthwhile investment, especially so this fall and spring because of the weather Alberta experienced this year.

**Don't Guess – Soil Test!**

*Contact: Len Kryzanowski*
*(780) 422-1252*

## Fertilizing eroded knolls

Many farmers across the province have fields dotted with eroded knolls that are relatively unproductive. In many cases, water and wind erosion or a combination of both has completely stripped away the organic matter rich topsoil and exposed the dense compact subsoil. Infiltration of water and penetration by roots may be restricted when dealing with this type of soil and air exchange may be restricted as well. This soil is poorly structured and hard to work into a good seedbed. It has a tendency to crust resulting in poor emergence and, with the reduction in water holding capacity and infiltration it is susceptible to drought.

"In addition to physical limitations, there may be significant chemical and nutritional limitations when working with the soil on knolls," says Ross H. McKenzie, soil fertility specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Lethbridge. "With the loss of nutrient rich organic matter, if erosion has brought the calcareous (high lime) subsoil near the surface, the resulting high pH will also reduce the availability of nutrients such as phosphorus (P). Volatilization losses from urea or anhydrous ammonia applications will also tend to be higher due to the alkaline pH."

The best procedure for restoring the productivity of eroded knolls is a combination of phosphorous fertilizer and manure applications. Start by taking a soil sample from the knolls in the field, it is likely that the P levels will be very low. Try an application of 75 to 100 pounds per acre of $P_2O_5$ (roughly 150 to 200 lbs of mono-ammonium phosphate – 11-55-0 or 11-51-0). Banded application of this nutrient at a depth of three to four inches is preferred. Late fall application will make it easier to just hit the knolls, but don't leave it on the surface or it could be lost with the spring runoff. Addition of manure will help improve both nutrient deficiencies and tilth problems. Apply manure at a rate of 10 to 20 tons per acre and incorporate it. It is best to apply and incorporate manure in the spring.

"Availability of manure may be a problem in some areas," notes McKenzie. "If you can't get manure, chopped straw can be used instead. It will add some organic matter, but not much in the way of nutrients. If neither straw nor manure is available, you should still get a good response to phosphorus fertilizer application alone. A banded application of 75 to 100 pounds per acre supplemented with the usual seed placement should enhance productivity for four to six years."

Once phosphorus is brought up to an adequate level, watch knolls for nitrogen deficiencies. Soil test the knolls separately and if the soil test indicates that nitrogen (N) levels are lower than the rest of the field give them an extra shot of N.

"The third part of reclaiming eroded knolls is to prevent future erosion," adds McKenzie. "Increased yields from the phosphorus and manure will help by providing more stubble. But, you must leave the stubble standing to protect the soil from further erosion. Options to consider are reducing or eliminating the number of tillage operations, especially fall disking. If you normally bale your straw, start leaving it on the knolls."

Even though this sounds like a lot of extra trouble, it should be noted that eroded knolls aren't likely to fix themselves. The bright side is that a reasonable return from the increased productivity should be realized on the time and money invested, and the producer has the satisfaction of leaving the land more productive than it was.

For further information, producers are encouraged to contact the Alberta Ag-Info Centre at 1-866-882-7677. Local fertilizer dealers, fertilizer industry agronomists and Alberta Agriculture extension agronomists are all excellent sources of information.

*Contact: Ross McKenzie*
*(403) 381-5842*

*Alberta Ag-Info Centre*
*1-866-882-7677*

## A challenging year for southern Alberta potato growers

"2002 has been a year full of challenges for Southern Alberta's potato growers," says Lori Delanoy, potato extension agronomist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Taber. "The year began with water shortage concerns and below season temperatures resulting in delayed planting. Early June rains, bringing more than eight inches of moisture to most areas across Southern Alberta, relieved growers of the water shortage worry, but left many fields with flooded and over-saturated areas. While central and northern

*cont'd on page 4*

parts of the province were experiencing severe drought conditions, water was being pumped from many fields across the south."

Below seasonal temperatures combined with excess spring moisture resulted in delayed emergence and seed piece decay. Yellowing crops (all crops, not just potatoes), caused by very wet soil conditions and leached nitrogen, became a major concern for many growers. Fertilizer dealers and crop consultants were kept busy as soil samples were taken and nitrogen was applied.

July arrived bringing hot temperatures across the province. Fields dried out and irrigating began. Crops that were approximately two weeks behind earlier in the season began to show promise and growers took on a more positive outlook for their later-season varieties. However, early-season varieties did not recover as well.

"August brought cool temperatures and processors delayed their early harvest due to immature tubers resulting in reduced specific gravity and quality," continues Delanoy. "Harvest started in mid-August with continuing concerns about quality and yields. Late-season potato varieties, specifically Russet Burbank, had quality issues early in the harvest season with growers and processors having to test fields for acceptable dry matter levels before they could harvest."

Harvest has been slow as growers deal with above average quantities of dirt mixed with their potatoes and wet areas from excess early-season moisture. Most growers were still harvesting during the week of October 14, and harvest was expected to wrap-up by the middle of the following week, provided frost damage does not stop harvests all together.

"Late September rains have also increased harvest challenges," says Delanoy. 'Grower stress at this time is of great concern. Growers who are experiencing problems dealing with the stress of the 2002 growing season, whether they've had conditions that were too wet or too dry, should not feel that they are alone. New and experienced growers alike are struggling to deal with the difficulties this season has dealt them."

Unfortunately, the challenges of 2002 may not be over. One major freeze in mid-October resulted in moderate frost damage to potatoes still in the ground. Tuber rot from wet soils and frost will result in growers having to pay special attention to stored potatoes and manage storages accordingly. On a more positive note, the current crop year has provided valuable information. With this information, growers may be better equipped to deal with such challenges in the future, hopefully not all of them again in the same year.

*Contact: Lori Delanoy*
*(403) 223-7915*

# City Slickers Harvest 2002

The fourth annual ***City Slickers Harvest*** was held in Stony Plain on September 20, 2002. Although the weather was chilly and a heavy wind was blowing dirt, nearly 900 grade four to six students from 17 urban schools came to the country to learn about modern agriculture in Alberta. These students have little contact with agriculture or a rural lifestyle. During the ***City Slickers Harvest***, the students had a chance to tour a working farm, see the harvest in process and tour exhibits and presentations provided by a wide variety of industry specialists. All costs of this unique outing, including transportation, were covered by sponsors.

"The first ***City Slickers Harvest*** was held in 1997 in the Airdrie area and, in 1999, it came to Stony Plain where the agriculture community works very hard to organize the events," says Cindy Kremer with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Ag Education and Training Branch, Edmonton. "Each year, support from industry and a wealth of volunteer talent is coordinated to bring a rich and engaging event to students who would otherwise find it difficult to see first-hand how agriculture operates."

"One of the many benefits of the ***City Slickers Harvest*** event is that the students begin to understand the complexity of farming as a business and an important part of Alberta's economy," adds Brent Andressen, also with Alberta Agriculture's Ag Education and Training Branch, Edmonton. "At the same time, these students see that agri-business offers diverse employment opportunities for youth who have not grown up on farms."

This year, the Stony Plain Multicultural Heritage Centre planted barley on a five-acre plot, cared for it like any other crop and kept statistics regarding the use of herbicides, the amount of precipitation and temperatures. This information was incorporated into a guide that teachers used to help orient their students. A portion of the crop was donated on the students' behalf to the Edmonton Food Bank and the East Parkland Food Bank in Spruce Grove.

The students and teachers enjoyed the day and came away with a greater understanding of where food originates.

*Contact: Cindy Kremer — Brent Andressen*
*(780) 427-4317 — (780) 427-4225*

# Bringing corporate parties and picnics out to the farm

Many businesses have family get-togethers or corporate parties for staff. Some farm direct marketers have seen this as an opportunity to offer their service and facilities to host these events, providing the infrastructure, food, entertainment and, in some cases, activities.

"Just about any farm direct marketer can consider adding corporate parties or picnics to their marketing mix," says Kerry Engel, with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Westlock. "The farm doesn't need to be big to accommodate corporate events. Many farms start small and target the size of picnic to the size of the farm and comfort level."

Farms hosting corporate parties site a number of reasons for pursuing the venture. The most common reason sited is that it isn't a capital-intensive project. The business doesn't need big buildings or need to make big expenses. For many direct marketers it is just a natural extension of what they are already doing. There is also guaranteed revenue because there is a guaranteed audience. An audience that prepays helps spread the risk. Corporate parties can be coordinated for the time of year and week that is easiest to accommodate and the marketing is done during the off-season.

"At the upcoming ***Explore Direct*** conference in Red Deer in January, participants will hear from the experts on how to create attractions and events on the farm," adds Engel

A few rules to keep in mind if contemplating becoming a corporate party planner:

- decide how many people can comfortably be handled
- investigate and develop the types of activities currently offered. Find out where to get supplies. Carnival supply companies are listed in the yellow pages
- rent or buy tents if additional covered space is needed Some companies will rent everything from tables to chairs to tents. These extras, if handled by the farm direct business need to be incorporate all into the costs. Don't forget about the port-a-potties
- the bulk of money with corporate parties is made on food. If using an outside vendor remember to mark up the costs. Prepare food that you feel comfortable preparing. Don't start off with elaborate menus. Hamburgers, hot dogs, salads, corn and a brownie work well for picnics. Don't forget to get the appropriate permits and work with your municipal development officers and health officials.
- determine the costs to the business. Establish a price. $20/adult and $10/child is a common base rate with "options" provided at an additional cost. For example, if the group wants a petting zoo it will cost an additional $500. Some farms also offer beer and wine at an addition flat rate cost. They find that when families attend the flat rate averages out in their benefit. When adults are out without their children, beer and wine sales can be a big money maker. The pricing would then be different.
- develop a marketing plan and network. Connect with convention and event planners and all the large businesses in the area. Most people will travel 30 minutes on a bus for a group activity. Some farms hire someone to specifically phone all the large companies in the area to find out who plans company social events. They then create a mailing list and send marketing materials during the off-season to a target audience.

"If your farm is already viewed as a unique, country destination, it may be worthwhile to investigate generating alternative income by doing parties," says Engel.

At the upcoming ***Explore Direct*** conference, Tamra Davison from Davison Orchards <www.davisonorchards.ca> will explore creative attractions, activities and events on the farm. ***Explore Direct*** is Alberta's only provincial conference for those marketing rural Alberta products direct to consumers.

***Explore Direct*** is being held in Red Deer on January 20 to 22, 2003. Information provided at the conference will help farm direct marketers increase sales, attract new customers, investigate the latest farm direct marketing and farmers' market practices, build professional relationships and maximize the effectiveness of their 'brand

Further information or a program and registration package, call (780) 679-1362 (toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000). Information is also available on the internet on Alberta Agriculture's web site <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/diversify>.

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# Agri-News Briefs

## Web-based organic agriculture courses

The Nova Scotia Agricultural College (NSAC) and the Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada (OACC) have developed four web-based courses that are available Canada-wide on the internet. The courses provide valuable support for producers considering moving into organic production. The four courses are: *Transition to Organic Agriculture*; *Composting Skills*; *Organic Field Crop Management*; and *Organic Livestock Production*. These courses are offered for both credit and not-for-credit. Participants completing all four organic agriculture courses on a not-for-credit basis will receive a Certificate in Organic Agriculture from the Centre for Continuing and Distance Education, NSAC. Tuition is $430 per course. For further information and to register, go to the OACC web site at <www.organicagcentre.ca>. For additional information regarding university credit study, obtain a NSAC application form by contacting NSAC, (902) 893-6722, Truro, Nova Scotia.

## Canadian Quarter Horse Association reactivated

The Canadian Quarter Horse Association (CQHA) is now operating as an official American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) Affiliate. The announcement came after 13 AQHA directors who reside in Canada petitioned AQHA for support and permission to operate as an AQHA-Affiliate. The primary objective for CQHA is to address issues of concern for Canadian residents who own American Quarter Horses. The CQHA will be a communication channel for Canadian residents who own American Quarter Horses and promote and market, internally and globally, Canadian-bred and/or Canadian-owned American Quarter Horses. In keeping with this mandate, CQHA has joined the Breeds & Industry Division of Equine/Hippique Canada (formerly Canadian Equestrian Federation). The Equine/Hippique Canada is Canada's only federally recognized national equine body and deals with issues and legislation affecting horse ownership. Membership in Equine/Hippique Canada permits participation and a voice in the affairs of the organization. More than 17,000 Canadian AQHA members are now registered as CQHA and Equine/Hippique Canada members. Information regarding CQHA membership is available on the internet at <www.cqha.ca>. A second web site, <www.equinecanada.ca>, is available for members wanting information about the organization. For more information about AQHA Affiliates or AQHA directors, contact Cindy Perez, AQHA communications manager, at (806) 376-4811, extension 327, or visit the web site at <www.aqha.com>.

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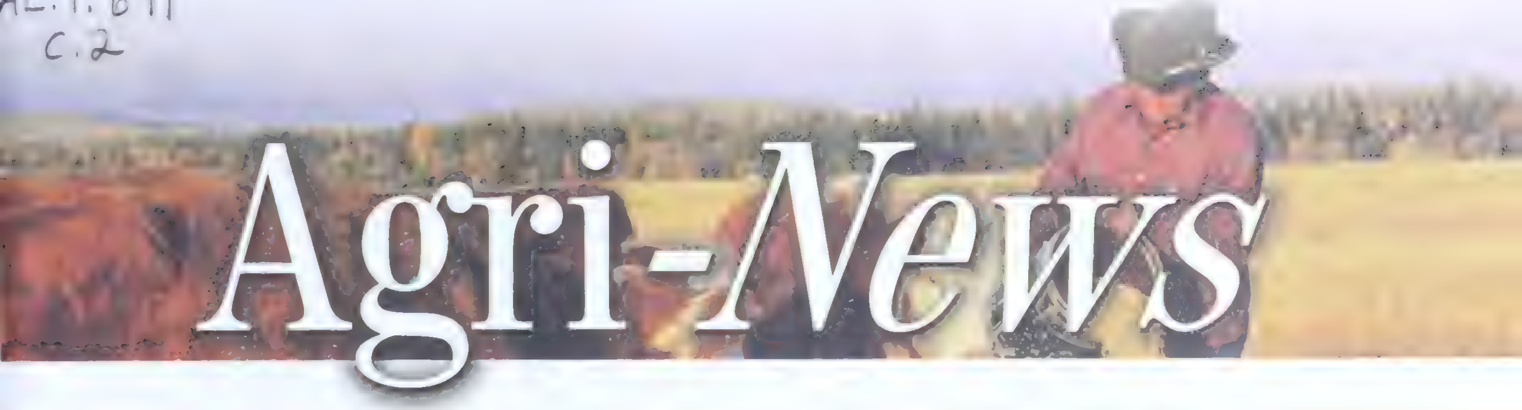

# Agri-News

November 4, 2002

## National 4-H Week – celebrate tomorrow's leaders

> *"4-H helps young people develop technical skills, placing them at the cutting edge of progress and provides them with the opportunity to participate in many programs and projects."*
>
> Her Excellency the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson,
> Governor General of Canada

Thousands of 4-H members across the country will celebrate Canada's longest running rural-based youth development organization during National 4-H Week, Nov. 4 to 10, 2002. National 4-H Week provides an opportunity for 4-H members to celebrate and showcase the many benefits of the program.

4-H has been an integral part of Canada for 89 years, and during this time has contributed to the personal development of more than a million young people. While maintaining its key objective of developing leadership skills, self-esteem and responsible citizenship, 4-H has evolved to meet the needs of today's modern youth through projects such as computers, crafts, photography and small business.

Last year, more than 32,000 boys and girls and 10,000 adult volunteer leaders across Canada pursued the 4-H motto ***Learn To Do By Doing*** by participating in exciting club activities and 4-H projects.

"Our recent Measures of Success II survey is proof positive that 4-H has a positive and lasting impact on the lives of its members," says Elizabeth Crouse, president of the Canadian 4-H Council. "As we prepare to celebrate 90 years of 4-H in Canada in 2003, we celebrate the thousands of young people who will play a role in shaping our country's future."

The long list of 4-H alumni includes politicians, accomplished entertainers, sports stars and leaders in business and entrepreneurship. During National 4-H Week, watch for displays, parades and other special community events as 4-H members, leaders, families and other supporters celebrate one of Canada's oldest and best youth organizations.

Central elements to National 4-H Week are the annual Friends of 4-H Banquet, National 4-H Conference and National 4-H Volunteer Leaders' Conference held in Toronto. 4-H members and leaders from across Canada, the U.S. and U.K. will come together to learn new skills, have fun and meet new friends.

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## This Week

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*ACTS 25th annual general meeting at FarmTech 2003* 2

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*What's your image?* 3

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Alberta delegates of the National 4-H Conference are Amy Deagle (Consort), Sean Granigan (Edgerton), Sharisse Hewko (Lamont), Mark Shologan (Rochester), Ainsley Wall (Coaldale), Anne-Marie Wiltzen (Fort Saskatchewan), and chaperone Cathrine Schribar. Helen Andrews (Sherwood Park), Evelyn Brittain (Lacombe), Sharon Uhrich (Airdrie) and Rosemarie Wisniewski (Hairy Hill) are Alberta leaders attending National 4-H Volunteer Leaders' Conference.

For information on Alberta's 4-H program, visit <www.4h.ab.ca> or contact the Provincial 4-H Office at (780) 422-4444 (toll free in Alberta by first dialing 310-0000).

*Contact:* *Mark Muchka*
*(780) 427-0753*

## Rodents on the move

This is the time of year when in the rural areas, people encounter strange looking or peculiarly behaving rodents in the most unusual locations. Strange, because most Albertans are unfamiliar with native rodents and what they look like, and peculiar because young animals seeking new territory are often seen in very unlikely places.

"This combination of confusing events leads the unwary observer to conclude that the rodent in question must be a rat because no other animal could possibly fit the circumstances," says John Bourne, provincial vertebrate pest specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Vermilion. "As a result, municipalities and Alberta Agriculture receive dozens of suspect rat sightings during this time."

In reality, this is the time of year when young, naïve and bewildered juvenile rodents disperse from family units and are simply seeking new territory and a place they can call home. This is what brings them into direct contact with people, often under puzzling and perplexing circumstances. Many of these juvenile rodents do not survive, perishing as a result of predation, starvation or exposure.

"For instance, a typical report is of a young muskrat, which is about the size and shape of an adult Norway rat, encountered in an unlikely place, such as a garage," explains Bourne. "This young rodent may scamper beneath the parked car or be seen scurrying across an open parking lot at the shopping mall or marching merrily along Main street in busy downtown traffic. This isn't unusual, it just appears that way because natural dispersion of these animals occurs only during a short period of time from late summer to mid fall. Under ordinary circumstances, a 'stray' muskrat would likely go unnoticed."

Similar sightings are not too uncommon for many of Alberta's other native rodents including ground squirrels, pocket gophers, field mice and, occasionally, tree squirrels and bushy tailed woodrats.

"In spite of the similarities common to all small rodents, there are many significant differences between our native rodents and Norway and roof rats," says Bourne. "The most distinguishing feature of a Norway or roof rat is its long, cylindrical, hairless tail that is nearly as long as the animal's body, usually about seven or eight inches. All native rodents including muskrats have considerably hairy tails."

Another major feature difference is the activity period of true rats versus native rodents. Norway and roof rats are nocturnal and therefore are very seldom seen during daylight hours. These rodents are also very shy and secretive and most reluctant to depart from their nesting area of hiding cover, even during the night.

"Close up differences are obvious, too," continues Bourne. "Norway and roof rats have very small, dainty, pinkish-coloured feet that are almost hairless and have fine, short claws. Ground squirrels, gophers and muskrats, on the other hand, have longer, heavier claws and large, dark-coloured feet for digging or swimming, and their feet are entirely covered with short, dense hair."

Norway rats have very small eyes and short ears that do not reach the eye; conversely, roof rats have long ears that touch the eye and large black eyes. Both have a short, almost blunt shaped nose.

Rat droppings are also distinctive and unique. They are about the size and shape of an olive pit, approximately ½ to ¾ inch long, and are black in colour and blunt at both ends.

"The most important action step to take in reporting a suspicious rodent that could be a rat, is to contact an Alberta Agriculture, municipal or city by-law office as soon as possible and preserve as much identifying evidence as possible, including any animal remains or droppings," says Bourne

*Contact:* *John Bourne*
*(780) 853-8225*

## ACTS 25th annual general meeting at FarmTech 2003

The Alberta Conservation Tillage Society's (ACTS) 25th Annual General Meeting is being held during the ***FarmTech 2003*** conference at the Mayfield Inn in Edmonton, January 29, 30, and 31, 2003.

"ACTS is very proud to be celebrating 25 years as a farmer organization dedicated to soil conservation and sustainable cropping systems," says Dwight Perry, the ACTS president and farmer, Coaldale. "We are pleased to be one of the hosts of FarmTech, Alberta's premier crop production and farm management conference." ACTS recently won the 2002 Growing Alberta Leadership Award for environmental stewardship.

*Cont'd on page 3*

Kenton Ziegler, chairman of ***FarmTech 2003***, welcomes ACTS as a full host adding, "ACTS is to be congratulated for their 25 years of commitment to soil conservation and their ongoing efforts to improve the environmental sustainability of Alberta's farms."

The ***FarmTech 2003*** conference features over 50 speakers addressing the latest in technology, environmental issues, agronomics and farm management through a series of concurrent sessions, *Farmers helping Farmers* workshops and Friday Super-Panels.

***FarmTech 2003*** is hosted by the Alberta Canola Producers Commission, ACTS, Alberta Pulse Growers, Alberta Reduced Tillage LINKAGES program and the Canadian Wheat Board Co-hosts are the Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission and the Alberta Barley Commission.

*Contact:* *Kenton Ziegler*
*(403) 947-2508*
*Rick Taillieu*
*Media & Promotions Coordinator*
*(403) 556-8235*
*<rick.taillieu@gov.ab.ca>*

For additional information and conference details visit <www.farmtechconference.com>

## Short-term solid manure storage

Short-term stockpiling of livestock manure from feedlots would be considered 'short-term solid manure storage' as long as it is accumulated in the same location for a total of not more than six months over a three-year period. Short-term solid manure storage areas are not considered 'manure storage facilities' and do not require an Authorization.

"As of January 1, 2002, amendments to the Agricultural Operation Practices Act (AOPA) brought major changes to livestock management in the province," says Dr. Mohamed Amrani, nutrient management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "There is a new one-window approval process for siting new or expanding confined feeding operations (CFOs), and for monitoring and enforcing compliance with province-wide standards for managing manure. The Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) administers the regulations under the Act."

The legislation provides storage standards that apply to all livestock production, including CFOs. Anyone who handles and stores manure must consider setbacks and flooding areas. In fact, a short-term solid manure storage must be located at least

- 150 metres from the nearest residence
- 100 metres from a spring
- 100 metres from a well
- 30 metres from a common body of water

Second, third and fourth conditions can be waived by the NRCB if the operator, before construction, can demonstrate that water sources are not likely to be contaminated.

Also, a short-term solid manure storage must:

- observe the 1:25 year flood plain or must be not than 1 metre below any part of the facility where runoff can be generated and come into contact with manure
- be located at least one metre above the water table
- have erosion control measures that protect the facility from erosion, runoff and run-on and flooding

Questions about manure management and standards can be directed to Amrani. Questions about enforcement and compliance may be directed to the NRCB Inspectors in Lethbridge (403) 381-5166; Red Deer (403) 340-5241; Barrhead (780) 674-8303; and, Fairview (780) 835-7111

The *Agricultural Operation Practices Act* and associated Regulations are posted on Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's web site at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/navigation/livestock/cfo/index.html>, click on ***Acts and Regulations*** under the ***Categories*** drop-down menu. The Act and Regulations can be printed from the web site. Questions can also be directed to <cfoinfo@gov.ab.ca>.

*Contact:* *Mohamed Amrani*
*(780) 422-9236*

## What's your image?

Experts say that first impressions are made in mere seconds The same holds true for people and businesses. John Stanley, an international retail consultant, believes that potential customers also make a decision about a business in seconds.

Stanley, who will be speaking in Red Deer this January at the ***Explore Direct*** conference, says that a business's image is one of the critical business development elements. He feels that if the image is wrong, the business will die. "It's a ten second game," stresses Stanley. "Decisions about image are made: from outside as people drive into the business; at the gate when people look in; when people meet the first member of your team."

### *Making an Impression – Put Yourself at Your Front Door*

Does your business portray the high quality and competent impression you want it to? Your image is an extension of what your business stands for. It should reflect your values and the business's values

*Cont'd on page 4*

Stanley urges business owners to put themselves at the front door of their business and to write down the first three things their eyes focus on. That first impression is your image. Business owners should then ask themselves: what did they see? Does that first glance tell a prospective customer what is being offering? Does it turn your head, make you smile or entice you to look for more?

Many people say that their staff, are the first thing customers see. However, caution must be used when basing an image on people because humans are inconsistent.

"You want your first impressions to be positive, relevant and memorable," notes Kerry Engel, chair of the ***Explore Direct*** conference and one of the specialists with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Ag Entrepreneurship Unit, Westlock. "It's a good idea to start with consistent, simple displays; cleanliness; and easily identifiable staff."

Stanley is wary of having a "price special" as a first impression. It's more desirable to have a value-added package as your first image than discounted product.

Develop an Image Checklist

A business can create an image checklist that staff has to go through at least once a day. The checklist might contain a fingerprint check, trash scan, name tags and signage examination. This checklist looks at what Stanley call "moments of truth". The checklist components are the building blocks that combine to create an image. They are the qualities that customers associated with your products and services. They are YOUR moments of truth!

John Stanley will be coming to Alberta for ***Explore Direct***, Alberta's only provincial conference for producers marketing rural Alberta products directly to consumers.

At the conference, farm direct business managers will hear information that will help them increase sales; attract new customers; investigate the latest farm direct marketing and farmers' market practices; build professional relationships and maximize the effectiveness of your own "brand".

The ***Explore Direct*** conference is being held in Red Deer on January 20 to 22, 2003. For further information or a program and registration package, call (780) 679-1362 (toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000). Information is also available on the internet at Alberta Agriculture's web site <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/diversify>.

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*Cell (780) 349-9017*

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# Agri-News Briefs

## Annual horse conference

The ***Alberta Horse Breeders and Owners Conference***, organized by the Horse Industry Section of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and the Horse Industry Association of Alberta is being held on January 10, 11 and 12, 2003 at the Capri Centre in Red Deer. The conference offers different programs designed to fit different equine interests. Conference participants can attend any of the sessions and will receive the printed materials from all sessions. Each year, excellent speakers present information on topics and issues that Albertans in the equine industry can benefit from. The agenda includes presentations on research findings, marketing information and training ideas and techniques. The program starts with a wine and cheese reception on Friday, January 10 at 7:00 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday's sessions begin at 8:40 a.m. Conference registration is $85 per person. For more information about the 2003 conference, contact Les Burwash, horse specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Airdrie, at (403) 948-8538. Government numbers are toll-free by dialing 310-0000 first.

## Pork seminar

The ***Banff Pork Seminar***, an annual event, is being held at the Banff Centre on January 14 to 17, 2003. More than 35 speakers will be on hand to present information to Alberta's pork producers. Session topics include: advances in genetic technology; antimicrobials: sow housing; nursery management; feeding to reduce disease; solutions to production limiting problems; innovative manure and water management; financial leverage through risk management; and, meeting future demands for animal care. Also, the program of the 2003 ***Banff Pork Seminar*** has been approved by the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association for Continuing Education credits and by the Alberta Institute of Agrologists for Professional Development (CPD) credits. Early registration, prior to November 29, 2002, is $210 per person, registration received after November 29 costs $260 per person. For further information or on-line registration, go to <www.banffpork.ca>. Registration forms can also be faxed to (780) 492-5771 or mailed to the ***Banff Pork Seminar***, 4-10 Ag-Forestry Building, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB T6G 2P5.

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Agri-News

November 11, 2002

## Horse Breeders and Owners Conference

Alberta Horse Breeders and Owners Conference, organized by the Horse Industry Section of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and the Horse Industry Association of Alberta is being held on January 10, 11 and 12, 2003 at the Capri Centre in Red Deer.

"Each year, the conference features excellent speakers to present information on topics and issues that Albertans in the equine industry can benefit from," says Les Burwash, horse specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Airdrie. "This year, 15 speakers are on the agenda and will make presentations on research findings, marketing information and training ideas and techniques."

Conference presenters for 2003 include:

- **Dr. Bob Coleman**, Lexington, Kentucky – Minerals for Horses – Feeding Horses When Feed is Short
- **Lynn McLeod**, Cochrane – When Hauling Horses, Know the Regulations
- **Dr. Ingvar Fredricson**, Sweden – Building Horse Breeding Program
- **Dr. Dennis Rach**, Balzac – Dental Care is Essential
- **Pete Frazer**, High River – Ethics in the Horse Industry
- **Dr. Steve Duran**, Weiser, Idaho – Conditioning the Long Distance Horse
- **Dr. Bill Saville**, Columbus, Ohio – Living with West Nile Disease
- **Dr. Andrew Parks**, Athens, Georgia – Managing Hoof Injuries
- **Dr. Tex Taylor**, College Station, Texas – Donkeys and Mule Basic Health Care; Different from Horses
- **Ron Lane**, Texas – Ranch Horse Competition: Impact on Horse Industry
- **Dr. Andris Kanepts**, Columbus, Ohio – Preventing Injuries During Training
- **Dr. Walter Threlfall**, Columbus, Ohio – Managing Stallions for Reproductive Efficiency
- **Terrance Collier**, Lexington, Kentucky – Marketing Horses, Do It Right
- **Dr. Trish Dowling**, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan – Are We Developing Super Bugs?

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AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

"Each year, the conference features an SPCA invited speaker as part of the ***Fred Pearce Memorial Speaker Series***," adds Burwash. "For 2003, that speaker is **Mother Hildegard George** from Shaw Island, Washington. She will be speaking on the topic Use of Animals in Therapy for Troubled Children."

For the past three years, the Alberta Horse Breeders and Owners Conference has been pleased to honour an Albertan or group of Albertans for their contribution to enhancing the horse industry. Selection criteria for this award include: significant accomplishments (40%); public benefit (30%); industry creditability (20%); and, potential for continued contribution to the industry (10%). Nominations can be sent to the Horse Industry Section of Alberta Agriculture, Bag Service #1, Airdrie, AB T4B 2C1. **Nominations must be received by November 20, 2002**.

"This conference offers different programs designed to fit different equine interests," says Burwash. "Conference participants can attend any of the sessions and will receive the printed materials from all sessions."

The program starts with a wine and cheese reception on Friday, January 11 at 7:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday's sessions begin at 8:40 a.m.

Conference registration is $85 per person. For more information about the 2003 conference, contact Burwash in Airdrie at (403) 948-8538. Government numbers are toll free by dialing 310-0000 first.

*Contact: Les Burwash*
*(403) 948-8538*

## Help make your 2003 crops better

"2002 will be a year to forget for many farmers in the Peace," says Nick Underwood P.Ag., C.C.A., agronomist with Reduced Tillage LINKAGES, Peace Region. "It was certainly, also, a year for learning things! Overall the Peace Country farmers faired a little better than some farmers in central and southern Alberta; however, there were some disaster areas and only a few people had above average or average crops."

As of the end of October, the Peace area has had snow and temperatures 5 to 15 degrees below average. Approximately 20 to 25 per cent of the area's crops are still in the fields and that amount could represent an amount equal to the area's profit.

"Everyone always hopes for better things next year, and it is probable that commodity prices will be better than 2001, and maybe even better than they are now," adds Underwood. "Taking advantage of those better prices may involve some serious thought and some different ideas."

In an attempt to help producers and get important information to them, several meetings are being organized that will provide useful forums for learning from other farmers and from specialists.

**Direct Seeding Advantage** – being held at the Executive Royal Inn in Nisku/Leduc on November 19 and 20, 2002, is a meeting aimed at all farmers in Alberta who are interested in reduced tillage and direct seeding. No matter where your farm is located in Alberta, this meeting and the scheduled sessions will be well worth the trip.

**A Direct Seeding meeting** – has been scheduled at the Dunvegan Inn on January 8, 2003. Dr. Tim Ball, the well-known climatologist and entertaining speaker, is heading the bill. Discussion at the meeting will also address machinery issues and some agronomy challenges. Farmer panels and farmer speakers are planned for inclusion and agenda planning is still ongoing.

**Cropping Strategies** – this meeting organized by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and Reduced Tillage LINKAGES is being held in conjunction with SARDA conference in Falher on January 24, 2003. The best provincial specialists will be speaking on topics such as: moisture probabilities, forage, crop selection, direct seeding, herbicide residues, pests, market outlook and financial management tools.

**FarmTech 2003** – on January 29 to 31, 2003 this premier technical farm meeting is being held at the Mayfield Inn in Edmonton (not in Red Deer). Watch for FarmTech posters for additional information or check *Top Crop Manager* magazine for more details.

For more information on any of these upcoming meetings and events, contact Underwood at (780) 814-1232 or e-mail <uwlltd@telusplanet.net>.

*Contact: Nick Underwood*
*(780) 814-1232*

## Agriculture books for the farmer or gardener on your list

As December approaches, the same questions come up every year – What do you buy for the person who has everything? Where can you find that something special, just the gift to give that 'hard-to-buy-for' person on your list?

Books make a great gift. For the gardening enthusiast, farmer, rancher, student or 4-H member on your list, it may be worth your while to check out some of the book choices available from Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

There are dozens of agriculture publications, ranging from $3 to $30, that make terrific gifts and stocking-stuffers. For example:

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- ***Alberta Yards and Gardens*** ($15 plus GST) – gives a fresh, unbiased look at what grows best in Alberta. It's packed with information about selecting ornamental trees and shrubs, lawns, small fruits and berries, flowers, vegetables, herbs and even water plants. Homeowners, hobby gardeners, serious horticulturists and landscape artists will find this book invaluable. It also gives tips and techniques for pruning, wintering roses, container gardening and attracting birds and butterflies.
- ***Garden-fresh Produce*** ($4 plus GST) – for advice on picking, preserving and preparing, this book will help you enjoy all those fresh vegetables, whether they are grown in your own garden or purchased at the store or nearest Farmers' Market. The easy-to-read, 56-page book covers information on pickling safety and preserving all types of vegetables and fruits. It also contains information about when to pick vegetables and fruit, how to store fresh produce and how to prepare great tasting dishes.
- ***Horse Health*** ($15 plus GST) – horse owners will love this book. It presents important information along with photographs and illustrations that give a thorough understanding of parasites, pests, infectious diseases, lameness and other common medical problems that can affect a horse's health. It shows how to prevent problems before they begin, how to treat problems and when to call the veterinarian
- ***Weeds of the Prairies*** ($20 plus GST) – full colour photos and illustrations detailing 112 weeds makes this the most complete work of its kind on the Canadian prairies Weeds are color-coded by flower color for easy reference, and the full index makes it easy to find the species by common, scientific or family name. Charts on life cycle and habitat provide valuable information, and maps show how widespread particular weeds are. This 266-page book will make planning a weed control program easier and more effective. It can also help youngsters learn how to identify weeds
- ***Beekeeping in Western Canada*** ($25 plus GST) – for experienced beekeepers and those just considering beekeeping, this book gives the information needed to manage honey bees successfully. Learn about the spring management of bees, winter feeding, honey extraction, honey bee health and marketing beeswax, pollen and honey crops. The provincial apiculturists in Canada's four western provinces packed this publication full of the best possible information on beekeeping in the west.
- ***Pulse Crops in Alberta*** ($25 plus GST) – this award-winning publication is a must-have for anyone interested in pulse crops. Learn the basics about pulse production or get more specifics in full color pages on field pea, dry bean, lentil and fababean. Also included is information on some lesser known pulses in Alberta, such as chickpea, fenugreek, grasspea, lupin and soybean.
- ***Growing Native Plants of Western Canada: Common Grasses and Wildflowers*** ($30 plus GST) – with over 100 pages of text and photographs, this book takes an in-depth look at 48 species of native plants that have shown promise for ecological repair. It will help anyone interested in collecting, growing and commercially producing native plants.
- ***How Herbicides Work: Biology to Application*** ($35 plus GST) – is an expanded look at the science of herbicides. The book is targeted at professionals who work with herbicides and at students. It would also be valuable to producers interested in the technical aspects of herbicides. With 134 pages of text, color tables, diagrams and photographs, the book provides an expansive discussion on the biology of herbicides as well as chapters on photosynthetic inhibitors, herbicide resistance, dose transfer, adjuvants and spray drift. There is also a section that focuses on how herbicides can best be applied.
- For those people on your list who like getting their information in front of a computer, ***Weed Identification Program CD-ROM*** ($10 plus GST) – is a helpful resource in identifying weeds and improving weed control. It was designed for farmers who want to improve weed control, agronomists who provide field service and backyard gardeners who will also find the CD useful. It contains information on five grasses and 56 broadleaf weeds. It also features a gallery of photos showing weeds at different growth stages; a description section that gives details about each weed; and, a glossary of terms

These, along with many other book titles make wonderful gifts and are available at the publications office of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6. Book orders can also be placed by calling 1-800-292-5697 (toll-free in Alberta) or (780) 427-0391 in Edmonton. Please add $2 (plus GST) per order for shipping and handling.

*Contact: Publications Office*
*(780) 427-0391*
*1-800-292-5697*

# Guidelines for specialty ag-business arrangements

Innovative collaboration is defined as new ways of working together or new ways of working with a competitor. "Whichever definition suits a situation, creative thinking and a clearly defined purpose for working together is required to achieve results," says Graham Gilchrist, business risk management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Vegreville.

*Cont'd on page 4*

Here's how two local agri-preneurs are exploring unique partnerships and coming to grips with the issues agri-preneurs should consider when stepping into specialty arrangements:

**Cooperatively marketing protein products** – Sharon Caswell of Country Natural Foods direct markets beef, lamb, chicken and eggs. She buys meat cuts directly from producers that complement the range of products she is producing and selling. Caswell pays producers for their meat and then sells it under the Country Natural Foods banner. The profit point for the primary producer occurs when they sell their products to Country Natural Foods. In this arrangement Sharon assumes more accountability and risk.

**Corn maze franchise** – Dan Horneman, co-owner of the Edmonton Corn Maze, has done something relatively new in the agri-tourism arena in Alberta. He and his partner purchased a corn maze franchise. Horneman feels that one of the major benefits in buying into a franchise was the amount of information the franchise offered. The franchise has the knowledge and statistics behind them and all the marketing materials.

"Franchises are known for keeping ownership of the "brand" and quality control," adds Gilchrist. "The franchisee usually holds a license and may even pay a royalty as per the master franchise agreement. Depending on the franchise you may also be required to participate in national campaigns and promotions associated with the brand at additional costs."

What should entrepreneurs consider when stepping into specialty arrangements? Gilchrist poses five questions to businesses exploring unique business arrangements:

- **Where's the cash?** It's an issue of ownership and profit. There is an assumption that each 'partner' in an arrangement is in the deal for the purposes of making money and achieving a profitable relationship. Your agreement should specify rights of ownership, sharing of profits/losses and pricing schedules.
- **How do you share the profits?** It must be determined who gets the profits/losses. Pick a profit point and establish where along the chain you want your cut of the profit to occur. Your share of profit reflects the amount of risk and loss you are willing to take.
- **Who shares in the loss?** It must be clearly defined who assumes the loss. Greater risks are sometimes associated with greater profits. Make sure you're clear about this. It is great to share profits, but you have know what happens when the venture needs extra money; how will it be raised; and, if the venture can't pay its bills, how protected are the owners' own businesses from the creditors.
- **What information is to be shared?** The contract must identify what information is proprietary and who benefits from the information.
- **Who is liable?** The group or the individual? You need to know whether or not your liability ends once product moves to the next level. For each business arena, different business risks challenge the business. Regulations, legislations, security and warranty issues also need to be addressed.

Even if you address all of these points the biggest factor is trust. Sharon Caswell shares, "I spend a lot of time explaining and educating to build trust with the producers and my clients. Trust is the big one."

"It all boils down to knowing and trusting the people you work with. Both parties need to have a clear understanding," says Gilchrist. "You never want to handle a dispute. Agreements and contracts provide an opportunity to outline all the issues you may encounter. Use the above points to provide a framework for that process."

For more assistance when considering specialty ag-business arrangements, Alberta farm business managers are encouraged to contact Graham Gilchrist at (780) 632-5417.

This latest issue of the ***Agri-preneur*** newsletter deals with partnerships for competitive advantage. To receive the newsletter free of charge, contact Darleen Lynes with Alberta Agriculture at (780) 349-4466 ext #1 (dial 310-0000 for toll free service) or e-mail <kerry.engel@gov.ab.ca>.

Albertans who market or want to market their products direct to the consumer through framers' markets, u-picks, market gardens, farm stores or direct to restaurants will want to attend the ***Explore Direct*** conference being held at the Red Deer Lodge, Red Deer, in January 20 to 22, 2003. For a program brochure, contact Lisa Sharp (780) 679-1362 or email <lisa.sharp@gov.ab.ca>.

*Contact: Graham Gilchrist*
*(780) 632-5417*

*Kerry Engel*
*(780) 349-4466*
*Cell: 780-349-9017*
*www.agric.gov.ab.ca/diversify*

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## *Over $72,000 awarded to 4-H scholarship recipients*

One hundred and thirteen Alberta 4-H members were awarded scholarships through the Alberta 4-H Provincial Scholarship Program. Corporate and private sponsors contributed over $72,000 to help 4-H youth achieve their academic goals. "The scholarship program not only provides financial assistance for recipients to attend post-secondary education, it also recognizes their 4-H, academic and community achievements," comments Mark Muchka, communication and marketing specialist for the 4-H Branch, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton.

*Cont'd on page 5*

Scholarship candidates submitted application forms listing their accomplishments, completed written interviews and provided three letters of reference. Each applicant was scored based on this information and selected according to the criteria set by the scholarship sponsor. A committee representing sponsors, the 4-H Foundation of Alberta, Alberta 4-H Council, University of Alberta and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development selected the recipients.

"A total of 220 applications were received this year," says Susann McGowan, marketing coordinator for the 4-H Foundation of Alberta. "I am impressed by the quality of submissions and in awe of the applicants' accomplishments."

The 4-H Foundation of Alberta must receive 2003 applications by May 1st, 2003. Application forms will be available in January at <www.4h.ab.ca>. For more information on the 4-H program, visit the 4-H web site or contact the Provincial 4-H Office at (780) 422-4444 (toll free by first dialing 310-0000).

*Contact: Mark Muchka*
*(780) 427-0753*

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# Feeding your flock this winter

Producers may need a little help this year when planning a winter-feeding program for sheep. Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, working in partnership with the Alberta Sheep & Wool Commission, has scheduled four ***Feeding For Performance*** seminars for sheep producers in November 2002

"At each of the seminars, experts will be making presentations and be entertaining questions to help producers get through what could be a difficult winter," says Susan Hosford, business development specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Camrose. "It's important for producers to determine the feed requirements of the flock and have a supply on hand to complete each production phase with a minimum in ration changes. Knowing nutrient content of the feeds in the ration is even more important this year than usual."

Experts at the seminars will address such topics as: knowing the intake level of various feeds; knowing the cost of individual feeds and of the ration; nutrient requirements of sheep at each production stage; and, monitoring sheep by routine body condition scoring.

"Both overfeeding and underfeeding are costly, as is incorrect supplementation," adds Hosford. "Supplementing the feed ration with vitamins and minerals or using a mineral/salt mix can both be successful, but it's important to know the nutrient value of the feed ration first."

Management practices for optimum flock health will also be covered. Topics rounding out the agenda include, separating sheep with different feed requirements so that ewe lambs do not have to try to compete with mature ewes and using well-designed feeders to reduce waste, prevent contamination of feed and allow more precise feeding.

"These seminars will be an opportunity for producers to work with sheep nutritionist Wray Whitmore, Manitoba Agriculture. Producers are encouraged to bring their feed analysis to the seminars so that advice can be based on individual needs," says Hosford. "Producers will also have a chance to learn how to use ***Sheepbytes***, a ration-balancer program. Copies of this program will also be available at the seminars."

***Feeding For Performance*** seminars will be held:

**Clairmont** –
November 23 10:00 a.m. Clairmont Senior Centre
Contact: Gertie Sorenson at (780) 568-3308

**Vegreville** –
November 24 1:00 p.m. Vegreville Provincial Bldg
Contact: Leslie Jans at (780) 796-2186

**Camrose** –
November 25 7:00 p.m. Camrose Professional Centre
Contact: Carol Poole at (780) 986-9809

**Airdrie** –
November 26 Airdrie Provincial Bldg
Contact: Margaret Cook at (403) 948-8533

For further information on the ***Feeding For Performance*** seminars, contact Hosford (780) 679-1352.

*Contact: Susan Hosford*
*(780) 679-1352*

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# Agri-News Briefs

## Explore Direct 2003

Explore Direct 2003 is the second provincial farm direct marketing conference. Conference Highlights include: a full day workshop on innovative merchandising with international merchandising guru, John Stanley; two keynote addresses *Creating an Image* with John Stanley and *Capitalizing on Trends* with Jim Hole; and, 14 select-a-sessions dealing with direct marketing meat, innovative marketing ideas, farmers' markets and planning for business success. The Alberta Farmers' Market Association Annual General Meeting is scheduled at the event, also. Evening Bear Pit sessions on Alberta farm direct marketers network (hosted by Alberta Market Gardeners Association) and the Idea Builder financing program (hosted by AVAC), round out the agenda. Explore Direct 2003 is being held at the Red Deer Lodge on January 20 to 22, 2003. For a program brochure contact Lisa Sharp, (780) 679-1362 (toll-free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000) or e-mail <lisa.sharp@gov.ab.ca>.

## Meeting the market

***Growth through Strategic Alliances*** is the theme of the ***Meeting the Market*** conference being held at the Capri Hotel, Trade and Convention Centre in Red Deer on November 19 and 20, 2002. The conference, sponsored by Agriculture & Food Council (AFC), AVAC, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, has an agenda full of international speakers who will make presentations on several aspects of alliance marketing. Whether involved in primary production, marketing or processing, this conference will provide Alberta farm and agriculture business managers information they will benefit from. Registration fee is $125 (plus GST) per person. Attendance is limited, so early registration is recommended. For further information, contact Laura Lee Billings, Alberta Agriculture, (780) 948-8519, or e-mail <laura.lee.billings@gov.ab.ca>.

## Managing through drought

A drought-related ***Thinking About S-T-R-A-T-E-G-Y*** series presentation is being held at three locations in Alberta in December. This one-day seminar ***Managing Through Drought*** focuses on climatic trends and managing through a drought. Dave Pratt, president of Ranch Management Consultants Inc. will present information on specific actions that can be taken to manage the current situation and prepare businesses for the next drought. Tim Ball, who has an extensive science background in climatology, reconstruction of past climates and impacts of climate, will also be making presentations at the seminars.

***Managing Through Drought*** will be held in Olds on December 10, 2002; in Camrose on December 11, 2002; and, in Westlock on December 12, 2002. Registration cost for this course is $50 plus GST ($53.50). Pre-registration is required by December 6, 2002 and pre-payment is also required. For further information or to register, contact:

- Olds seminar – Karen Carson (403) 556-4218, e-mail <karen.carson@gov.ab.ca>
- Camrose seminar – Shirley Damberger or Jennifer Hart (780) 672-3640
- Westlock seminar – Bill Chapman (780) 349-4405, e-mail <bill.chapman@gov.ab.ca>.

## New generation co-ops

New Generation Co-ops (NGCs) have been very successful in the U.S., but many Albertans are unfamiliar with the term and wonder what an NGC is. The ***New Generation Co-ops*** technical seminar, being held at the Coast Terrace Inn, Edmonton, on December 3 and 4, 2002, will explain what an NGC is, how it works, why it works and how to start getting organized and how to develop an NGC. The keynote speaker at the seminar is Bill Patrie, Mandan, North Dakota, who is one of the driving forces behind the development of NGCs in the U.S. Registration fee for the seminar is $100 (plus GST) per person. Registration deadline is November 22, 2002. For further information or to register, contact Merle Good at (403) 556-4237, Olds; Ted Darling at (403) 948-8524, Airdrie; Graham Gilchrist at (780) 632-5417, Vegreville; or Linda Hawk at (403) 528-5250, Medicine Hat.

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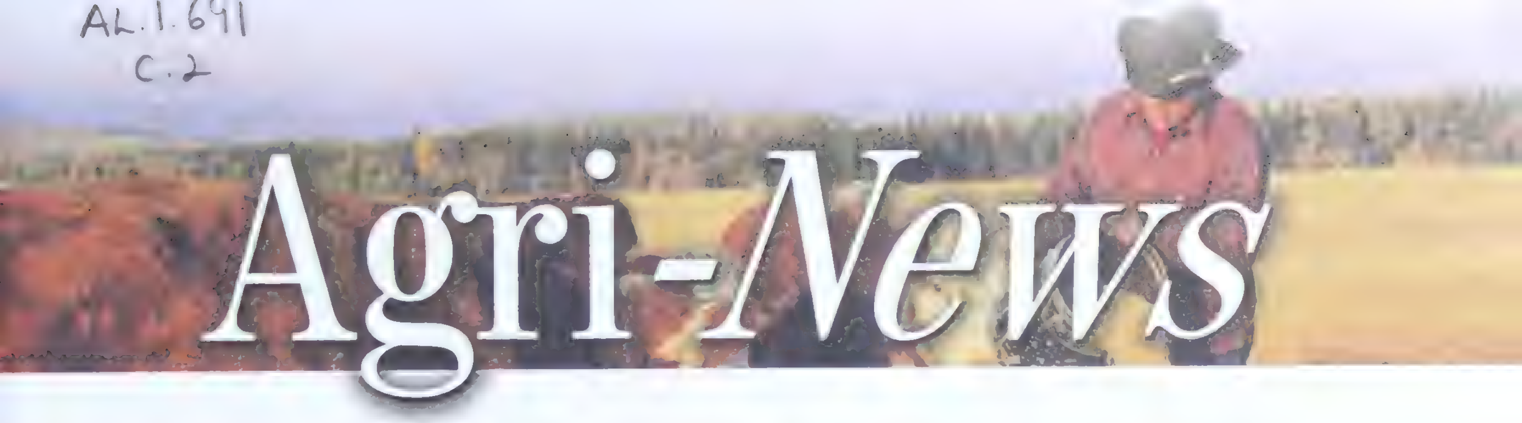

# Agri-News

November 18, 2002

## Exciting times for greenhouse industry in Alberta

Alberta's greenhouse industry is one of the most rapidly growing sectors of agriculture business. The greenhouse industry's gross income went from $75 million in 2000 to over $100 million in 2001. Over the last decade, there has been an average growth of 10 to 12 per cent per year. More than 400 greenhouse growers in Alberta deliver a variety of produce from fresh vegetables to bedding plants and cut flowers to consumers.

"Alberta's greenhouse industry is the fourth largest in Canada after Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec," says Nick Savidov, provincial greenhouse scientist and leader of greenhouse crops program at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South (CDCS), Brooks. "Alberta's industry has demonstrated the highest growth rate. There is potential for Alberta to become even larger, partly due to the gas resources and the significant number of sunny days."

The Greenhouse Crops Program at the CDCS is focusing on new technologies in the greenhouse industry. The program relies on collaboration with specialists from various academic and government institutions possessing expertise in different areas including agricultural research and production, economics and marketing, business development and entrepreneurship.

The Alberta Nutri-Vegetable Initiative (ANVI) is a new umbrella project proposed by the fruit and vegetable programs led by Drs. Nick Savidov and Chris Neeser. Projects under the ANVI umbrella include a feasibility study on vegetables enriched with calcium and the development of nutritionally enhanced edible coatings to improve shelf life of vegetables. Using the positive result from these projects, Alberta's growers will be producing and marketing the first functional vegetables in Canada.

"The Brooks Aquaponics Facility (BAF) at CDCS, is unique in Canada, and is the result of combined efforts of the Provincial Aquaculture Program led by Eric Hutchings and the Greenhouse Crops Program," adds Savidov. "Aquaponics is cutting-edge technology based on recycling nutrients produced by the fish and growing high value organic vegetables without synthetic fertilizers. The water is filtered by the plants and returned pure to the fish tanks. Organic food production is a rapidly growing industry in Canada and the U.S. and this operation plans to tie into those markets."

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**Internet site: www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agrinews Editor e-mail: agrinews@gov.ab.ca**

Alberta
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Organic greenhouse operations are higher risk because of the greater potential for yield loss from diseases and various nutrient disorders. Aquaponics may reduce the risk of organic production in the greenhouse because it is a soil-free technology and is an excellent example of sustainable agriculture.

"This new industry, based on organic hydroponics, has been demonstrated very effectively in the U.S. Virgin Islands, where the world's largest commercial aquaponic facility was built," explains Savidov. "The aquaponics project in Brooks is aiming to prove economic feasibility of the new technology in Alberta."

The aquaponic facility at CDCS was constructed with an assistance of the expert team from the U.S. Virgin Islands led by Professor Rakocy. The facility will be running at full capacity by the end of the March 2003. An open house of the Greenhouse Crops Program and an Aquaponics Workshop is planned for April 2003.

"The development of novel greenhouse substrates based on a new material Zeolite is one of the projects being carried out by the Greenhouse Crops Program at CDCS," continues Savidov. "Zeolite has a wide range of applications because of its unique ability to absorb large amounts of mineral salts and water. The preliminary results have indicated that this material can potentially boost yield by 10 to 15 per cent under certain conditions. This increase will allow Alberta greenhouse growers to considerably increase their profit margins and be more competitive. The used substrate containing zeolite is a valuable slow release fertilizer and can be potentially marketed for secondary use in tree nurseries."

The major objective of Greenhouse Crops Program at CDCS is to be a valuable research resource for growing greenhouse industry in Alberta.

*Contact: Dr. Nick Savidov (403) 362-1312 — Dr. Chris Neeser (403) 362-1331*

## The eight myths of farm succession planning

"Farmers have this tendency to put succession planning off until tomorrow," says Dean Dyck, financial business analyst with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Red Deer. "The problem farmers experience when they consider succession planning could be caused by the fear of dealing with the unknown, of being put out to pasture or of facing the loss of a business they created. Ultimately, one of two options exists for every farm business owner, either the succession of your farm will be an event controlled and planned by you or it will be an unplanned occurrence brought on by outside forces. More harshly put, either you implement a succession plan or your farm business could be sold."

There are many stumbling blocks to successful family farm succession planning. Here are eight of the most common:

1. **A 51 per cent ownership in the farm business means control** – perhaps in the legal system, but in practice family consensus vetoes voting control. Spouses, children and daughters-in-law are seldom ignored
2. **Tax and estate considerations are the basis for farm succession planning** – this is not really the case. Decisions about the business are usually made on the basis of soft issues, such as what is fair to all the children or how the next leader will be chosen and trained
3. **If I give them ownership, they'll put me out to pasture** – working out future roles in advance will help ease the owner's fears of losing their self-worth and having no place to go. Perhaps the owner can be the CEO who everyone turns to for advice
4. **It's too expensive or I can do my family's succession planning without outside help** – it is true that lawyers and accountants can charge quite a bit per hour. While farm managers can do it themselves, they would have to be up on tax planning, insurance, business valuation, family and property law, investment management and so on. That's why paying for the professionals to help with the plan can actually save time and money. They have years of experience and know the best way to structure the farm business to meet your needs
5. **My will provides for fair and equal treatment of all my children** – fair and equal is a noble concept, no one wants to say that they treat one child better than the others. However, considering the financial viability of the farm, being fair does not necessarily mean being equal
6. **Everyone knows what I want to do with the farm** – communication between (and even within) the generations is critical to a successful succession plan. The plan has to meet the needs of everyone involved in the operation
7. **Succession planning is too complicated** – a plan that includes succession, family and business planning is usually based on good old common sense. It is something that can be completed by the owner who is willing to set personal goals and business priorities
8. **I'm immortal** – if you think you're immortal, consider friends and neighbours who finally faced up to planning responsibilities after an accident, an illness or a heart condition. Needless to say, it is much better to start before any unforeseen occurrences make it unavoidable.

"The eight common myths about succession really do need to be put to rest," concludes Dyck. "For the good of your farm business and your family, it's important to begin planning your succession now."

*Cont'd on page 3*

The Farm Estate Advisory Group, in conjunction with Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development and Alberta Agricultural Societies, are sponsoring a series of ***Will and Succession Planning*** seminars in the province for farmers and business owners. Seminars are being held in:

- Cold Lake, Exhibition Park, November 19th at 7:00 pm
- Westerose, Lakedell Centre, November 21st at 7:00 pm
- Bashaw, Neighbourhood Place, November 27th at 7:00 pm

Contact your local Agricultural Society for admission price and registration information.

*Contact: Dean Dyck*
*(403) 340-7007*

## AVAC and Alberta Agriculture work together to help clients

AVAC Ltd. and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development have entered into a working partnership that will benefit Alberta entrepreneurs who need assistance with their early-stage projects.

"This partnership will give Alberta entrepreneurs working with secondary and tertiary production, agri-value production, access to the extensive networks and resources that these organizations have developed," comments Keith Jones, president and CEO, AVAC Ltd.

"Having AVAC partner with Alberta Agriculture is good news for clients. Clients can expect top notch service through industry development officers who have a full complement of resources at their fingertips," states Peter Woloshyn, director of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's business and innovation division, Edmonton.

Five Alberta Agriculture staff members from across the province have become AVAC liaison partners. They will continue to work for Alberta Agriculture, but will also be dedicated to value-added agriculture growth by helping clients access financing through AVAC's Idea Builder investment program.

The five individuals are:

- **Carrie Butterwick**, business development branch, Foremost;
- **Vince Ohama**, agri-preneur action unit, Red Deer;
- **Lynn Stegman**, agri-processing branch, Red Deer;
- **Elaine Stenbraaten**, business development branch, Fairview; and,
- **Suzanne Tenold**, agri-processing branch, Airdrie.

AVAC's Idea Builder program provides streamlined access to seed capital for early stage, smaller projects that add value to agricultural commodities. Projects may include ideas such as new food and health products, marketing innovations and breakthroughs in food processing technologies. Applications may be downloaded from the AVAC web site and can be submitted to AVAC via email, fax or mail.

AVAC is an Alberta-based, not-for-profit, private company that invests in innovative ideas through coaching, knowledge, contacts and financial resources that add value to agricultural commodities. AVAC's mission is to help accelerate the growth of agri-value in Alberta. Created in 1997, AVAC has to date committed more than $19 million to agri-value initiatives.

*Contact: Keith Jones*
*(403) 274-2774*
*kjones@avacltd.com*

*Peter Woloshyn*
*(780) 422-2853*
*peter.woloshyn@gov.ab.ca*

## Market direct – more than putting up a sign

Fall farm auctions are a part of the rural Alberta landscape. With packed parking lots and a never ending flow of people, they're a great place to promote a farm direct marketing operation. One bison producer who bought advertising space at the local auction mart said it was the best promotional strategy he'd invested in

"Farm direct marketing encompasses everything from setting up a farm store to selling free range chicken at the local farmers' market," says Karen Goad with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, and member of the ***Explore Direct 2003*** conference planning committee, Grande Prairie

There is more to farm direct marketing than putting out a sign and opening the gates. You need to understand why consumers buy. People want a connection with the farmers who are growing their food and they're looking for a safe, wholesome product they can trust.

"Determine the wants and needs of potential clients and you'll attract repeat customers," adds Goad. "Knowing what customers want from their experience at the farm store, what they are looking for, will go a long way in making a farm direct business a first choice for buying more than just meat for dinner. Find out what extras might attract the consumer's attention – things such as milk or bakery items. If the business has play area for kids, make sure it's safe. Make your farm store a weekend family destination that customers can use to get out of the city for a little while."

One of the featured speakers at the upcoming ***Explore Direct*** conference, Tamra Davison of Davison Orchards, knows what her customers want from her farm store. Davison and her

*Cont'd on page 4*

family operate a third generation family farm in the Okanagan Valley, B.C. Their farm store attracted an estimated 230,000 visitors last year. The farm store is the backbone of their farm direct marketing operation that also includes orchard tours, special events, fundraising opportunities, a gift shop and a farm bakery.

To hear the Davison story, farm direct marketers are invited to attend ***Explore Direct 2003*** being held on January 20 to 22, 2003 in Red Deer. The conference features 14 select-a-sessions in four program streams: farmers' market; farm direct marketed meat; new ventures (such as farm stores, creative attractions and special events, agritourism and regional cuisine); and planning for change. The ***Explore Direct*** agenda also includes: a full day workshop – *Innovative Merchandizing*, with international marketing guru John Stanley, two evening bear pit sessions and two keynote addresses: *Building An Image* with Stanley and *Capitalizing On Trends* with Alberta's own Jim Hole of Hole's Greenhouses and Gardens Ltd.

Farm direct marketers aren't born. Producers must learn, experiment and develop their marketing skills. The **Explore Direct** event can be a great first step to get Alberta farm direct marketers on their way!

Call 780 679-1362 (toll free access dial 310-0000 first) for program information and a registration package.

*Contact: Karen Goad*
*(780) 538-5629*

## New AGC members

Over the summer and early fall, three new farmers have been appointed to the Alberta Grain Commission (AGC). The AGC is an appointed group, mandated to review issues relating to the grain and oilseed sectors, to maintain liaison with industry groups inside and outside of Alberta, to make recommendations to the Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Development, and to promote the ongoing growth and development of the grains industry in Alberta.

The three new members include:

- Greg Porozni – a mixed grain farmer who also has a cow calf operation near Vegreville
- John Richter – operates a mixed farm, including eggs, cereal grain and oilseeds at Beiseker
- Bob Hymas – has a mixed farm operation in the Strathmore area

The three new members of the AGC have been active in their communities, as well as in various agricultural organizations. The appointments of Ken Motiuk from Mundare, and Pat Durnin from Kathyrn, have expired. By appointing three farmer members as two memberships expire, the Minister has increased the number of farmer members from seven to eight. This increase will ensure that the AGC remains farmer focused.

The membership of the Commission is now comprised of:

- Eugene Dextrase – High Level – farmer member (Chairman)
- Doug Horner – Sturgeon-St. Albert – MLA member (Vice Chairman)
- Lloyd Annable – Carmangay – farmer member
- Robert Hymas – Strathmore – farmer member
- Jim Ness – New Brigden – farmer member
- Terry Niemela – Eckville – farmer member
- Greg Porozni – Vegreville – farmer member
- John Richter – Beiseker – farmer member
- Harry Schudlo – Sexsmith -- farmer member
- Stan Blade – Edmonton – department member
- Lou Normand – Edmonton – department member

The AGC will continue to work with industry in fulfilling the AGC mission to "ensure that policies and programs met the needs of farmers, and promote a viable, market-driven farm and agri-food sector."

*Contact: Erin Holowach, A.Ag.*
*Alberta Grain Commission*
*(780) 422-0878*
*E-mail: erin.holowach@gov.ab.ca*

## Berwyn couple newest additions to Alberta 4-H Hall of Fame

Stella and Edward Pimm are the 2002 inductees to Alberta's 4-H Hall of Fame in recognition of their significant volunteer contributions to the rural youth program and agriculture in Alberta.

"The Pimms made 4-H a family affair and devoted a good portion of their lives to 4-H programs at the local, regional and provincial level," says Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "Their energy and enthusiasm have developed the Berwyn club into a vibrant part of their community. The Pimms truly live the 4-H commitment to leadership and skill development of its members."

Edward Pimm's lifetime relationship with 4-H began in his youth. Since then, he participated in 4-H as the Berwyn club's general leader, and served at the regional and provincial executive levels. In 1998, Edward was honoured as the town of Berwyn's Citizen of the Year for his significant community contributions.

*Cont'd on page 5*

Stella Pimm became involved as a parent leader in the 4-H program as a 4-1-1 Mom in 1983. As the Berwyn 4-H Club's general assistant leader, she served as administrator, fundraiser, and builder of strong community relations. In addition to her 4-H contributions, in 1991, Stella was appointed Berwyn's Citizen of the Year for her hours of volunteer work.

The Pimm family, which operates a mixed-farming operation raising hay, grain and cattle, was honoured with an Alberta Farm Family Award in 1989. In addition to Edward and Stella's participation, their children are active 4-H members and served as ambassadors and leaders.

The Pimm's will be honoured at the official ceremony during the annual 4-H Leaders' Conference in Red Deer, January 18, 2003.

Created in 1971, the 4-H Hall of Fame has recognized 57 men and women of Alberta who significantly contributed to Alberta's rural youth and agriculture. Each inductee has been a 4-H leader at the local, regional, provincial, and/or national level. They have

demonstrated outstanding leadership in the program promoting the 4-H motto of *Learn to Do by Doing* and live out the 4-H pledge of service and commitment to club, community and country through all activities and levels of the organization.

"Nominations to the 4-H Hall of Fame can only be made by people outside the candidate's immediate family," says Marguerite Stark, head of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's 4-H Branch, Airdrie. "A member or leader from the local club may nominate a candidate and nominations require supporting letters from representatives of the 4-H district and regional councils. Additional community references must be included. A selection committee, consisting of key leaders of the provincial 4-H council, the 4-H Foundation and representatives from Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's 4-H Branch, evaluates each submission based on the candidate's strong personal qualities as well as their significant contributions to 4-H, agriculture and rural life."

For more information about 4-H in Alberta or the Alberta 4-H Hall of Fame, visit the 4-Hweb site at <http://www.4h.ab.ca>.

*Contact:* *Marguerite Stark*
*(403) 948-8510*
*Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access in Alberta*

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# Agri-News Briefs

## Composting livestock mortalities

Mortality is an unavoidable part of dealing with animals and composting can be a very good option for disposal of livestock carcasses. Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has two publications that deal with this issue; ***Livestock Mortality Management – Disposal*** (Agdex #400/29-1) deals with the legal options regarding carcass disposal. ***Poultry Motrality Composting*** (Agdex #450/29-1) is a 'how to' guide for composting targeted at the poultry industry. Copies of these two factsheets are available by calling toll free to Alberta Agriculture's publications office at 1-800-292-5697.

## Is there a role for cheese in your diet?

Cheese is easy to use and nutritious. It is high in calcium and protein and is a good source of vitamin A, riboflavin, niacin, vitamin B12, zinc, phosphorous and magnesium. Many consumers who may have cut cheese out of their diet because they fear the fat content, may be interested to know that most of the fat in the average diet comes not from dairy products, but from snack foods, baked goods and added fats, such as salad dressings. Many Canadians, especially teenagers, don't get enough calcium – adding some cheese to meals and snacks can make a big difference in the intake of essential vitamins, minerals and protein. For further information, contact Alberta Milk (780) 453-5942 or toll free in Alberta at 1-800-252-7530.

## Preserve it with honey

Findings from a study by the National Honey Board and Cornell University, Department of Food Science and Technology, have determined that the growth of many microorganisms is either partially or completely inhibited in the presence of diluted honey. The significance of the study is in the possible use of honey as a preservative in some foods and food products. The study showed that incorporating honey into foods could enhance their safety and shelf life. The new research showed the efficacy of honey against a range of food spoilage bacteria and food pathogens. Work continues on the practical applications that may be possible in the future. For further information, contact the Canadian Honey Council, (403) 208-7141, Calgary. The web site address for the Canadian Honey Council is <www.honeycouncil.ca>.

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# Agri-News

November 25, 2002

## Deadline approaching for FIAP 2002 applications

Farmers and ranchers have only until November 30, 2002 to apply for the 2002 Farm Income Assistance Program, says John Knapp, Director of Alberta Agriculture's Rural Services Division. "To date we received approximately 46,000 applications. We are anticipating about another 6,000 applications, which means almost one in eight producers has not yet applied," says Knapp.

The $324 million Farm Income Assistance Program 2002 (FIAP 2002) was announced on July 17, 2002 by the Honourable Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. The program provides support to producers across Alberta who faced drought and other economic hardships in 2002. Payments include $10 per acre on tame hay and tame pasture, $7.15 per acre on cultivated annual crops and $4 per acre on native forage. The program also provides payments of $4.50 per hive for honey producers, $100 per acre for perennial horticulture, and $0.20 per square foot for greenhouse and mushroom production.

To date, more than 90 per cent of those who have applied have received a payment, with over $215 million already paid out to farmers and ranchers across Alberta. "We're beginning to hear from machinery dealierships, vet clinics, feedmills, bulk fuel and fertilizer dealers that their trade accounts are being paid down, so we know that this money is recirculating in rural Alberta," says Knapp.

Applications will need to be postmarked, or fax timed no later than midnight November 30, 2002 to be eligible for payment. Knapp adds that he doesn't anticipate any extension to the deadline, so he encourages producers to apply immediately.

*Contact:* *John Knapp*
*(780) 415-9755*

## This Week

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

## *Intake trials show interesting results*

A recent trial conducted by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and the Alberta Cattle Commission concludes that feeding cows limited dry matter intake (DMI) rations may be an answer to help preserving Alberta's beef cattle herd.

The Kinsella Corn Grain and Limited Intake Trial concludes that feeding limited DMI rations to beef cattle can maintain body condition scores if protein, energy, mineral and vitamin requirements are met, and that corn grain is an effective energy source for beef cows. Using these conclusions, producers are encouraged to work with their nutritionist to develop a program suitable for their individual operations.

The trial saw 75 cows fed either a diet of corn and pellets with hay or straw, at 0.5 per cent or 0.75 per cent of body weight daily, or straw, hay and pellets as part of a control group. All cows were fed once daily in the morning, with a corn/pellet mix first, followed by the fibre component an hour later. The test lasted 56 days with the animals being weighed every two weeks and condition-scored every four weeks.

"We found no differences in body condition score among the different treatments during the trial," says Trevor Yurchak, beef specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Athabasca. "The control cows did gain more weight, but this was influenced by rumen fill. We narrowed this difference in weight gains from an average 99 lbs to 55 lbs by giving the animals in all groups full feed access for three days at the end of the trial."

Yurchak says the Kinsella trial supports feeding cows limited DMI rations. "Our recommended ration is one per cent of the cow's body weight in dry matter roughage. With superior management and facilities, this can be decreased to .75 per cent.

"Trial results indicate little difference between straw-fed and hay-fed animal," continues Yurchak. He believes producers should choose between hay and straw based on what is available and the price. "As well, the trial shows whole corn grain to be an effective energy source," he says. "However, if you're going to go with a corn or limited DMI ration, you have to carefully monitor the animals protein, energy and mineral levels. Magnesium levels in particular have to be monitored closely."

What are the implications of these findings? Yurchak says that by feeding animals DMI rations, a producer can cut the cost of feeding a cow per day from between 10 and 28 cents. Based on these cost savings, producers have the potential to save $4000 this winter, and feed cows on less than half the forage they traditionally use.

"If fibre requirements need to be cut by more than half, these trials offer a solution to the problem of reduced fiber yields," says Yurchak. "Even if the industry uses these results to make only small changes in management, the net benefit will be fewer cows needing to be liquidated."

Producers should always consult with a nutritionist before changing their animals' diets. For more information, contact Yurchak in Athabasca at (780) 675-8219.

*Contact:* *Trevor Yurchak*
*(780) 675-8219*

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## *Direct seeding – more than opener design*

There are numerous factors at play in a direct seeding system, one of them is the opener, and many producers inquire about which opener is the best. As a matter of course, too much emphasis is placed on choosing an opener. A tremendous amount of time and effort have gone into research and design testing of most of the direct-seeding technology in use today.

"For growers, opener choice often begins at ground level by deciding on the soil disturbance and field finish created by the seeding implement, along with consideration for a compatible fertility package," says Ron Heller, reduced tillage agronomist with RT LINKAGES, Vermilion. "Numerous manufacturers offer several variations at competitive pricing and a bit of field-testing will go a long way. However, because an opener doesn't just seed, a discussion from the standpoint of basic opener function may be helpful to indicate what "best" infers."

An important goal for direct seeding is to ensure the crop is favored over weeds. Undisturbed soil and mulched crop residue between the seed rows contribute to the success of direct seeding. Fewer weeds grow and less soil moisture is lost (narrow openers and wide row spacing optimize this).

"Minimal soil disturbance with precision-placed crop nutrients at the time of seeding is the key," adds Heller. "There are important equipment issues and guidelines related to soil texture, crop type and fertilizer forms and each producer has to evaluate these factors based on their needs, the crop they are growing and their soil conditions."

There are, however, four distinct designs that have become standards in both factory and farm-built direct seeding machines:

- Side-banding (SB) is the art of placing a concentrated fertilizer band nearby, but safely separated from a row of seed. Sometimes this is accomplished with a single opener, while other implements rely on a combination of openers, row packers and other attachments
- Mid-row banding (MR) is the placement of nitrogen fertilizer between two adjacent seed rows. A separate opener, usually a narrow knife or rolling disc coulter is required.

*Cont'd on page 3*

- Paired-row seeding (PR) combines the first two concepts. Typically, the opener is designed to place fertilizer between and below two narrow spaced rows of seed. Some machines use a grouping of openers.
- Spread-row (SR) generally applies to a system that distributes seed and fertilizer in a broad, open pattern. Various fabrications mingle or separate the seed and fertilizer in a range of width and depth.

"As described here, most of these designs depend on a uniform and balanced distribution," says Heller. "Air seeding provides multi-shoot delivery systems that place seed, fertilizer and other products in variable combinations and locations spread over a large area of machinery. This refined technology is not cheap, but appears to be crucial in the satisfactory performance of the modern direct seeding machine. Some modification of these standards occurs with liquid fertilizer, lower nitrogen rates, or single-shoot delivery."

Direct seeding allows a range of wider row spacing than with traditional seeding methods. This means superior crop residue clearance and improved equipment and field efficiency. Many studies have shown that row spacing up to 30 cm (12 inches) does not significantly affect emergence or yield in direct-seeded crops, with attention to weed control and appropriate seedbed utilization (SBU). This refers to the spread and distribution of seed and fertilizer in a row of crop. According to research, guidelines for SBU may differ with soil quality and crop type.

The 'best' openers merge all of the above points for one-pass seeding, however, many operators are satisfied with a simple two-pass method – low-disturbance angle-discs, shank points, knives, spoons, or modified hoes and sweeps to pre-band fertilizer ahead of seeding. Often the same implement is used for both operations. Caution is needed with multi-passes, because compromises to seedbed integrity can occur (i.e., pre-seed weed control, residue clearance, row-packing, etc.) The implement designs presented will normally perform best the first time over a field. Direct seeding into pre-worked fields is not the same as into undisturbed stubble.

"The soil-engaging performance, residue clearance and fertilizer delivery of any direct-seeding machine is more than engineering," concludes Heller. "Selecting a design best suitable for a farm's soil and climate will vary by location and a manager's preference for lower or higher soil disturbance. Each design works best under specific conditions. All machine designs have limitations and not every machine will achieve the same results in the same field for the same crop every year. A farmer's direct-seed cropping system must not only address soil texture, but also a fertility program, crop rotation, field finish, weed situations, and his harvesting system. This may seem complex, but it is now being done successfully for over 65 per cent of the annually cropped acres in Alberta (2001 Canada Ag.Census). Operator skill and experience ultimately become chief factors that determine which opener works well."

Although no one opener can be dubbed the best, direct seeding 'works' best with attention to the points mentioned. A grower should be asking whether or not his objectives can be achieved with just an opener. Better openers or more openers are not necessarily needed, the focus should be on more direct seeding! Consulting with experienced direct seeders, watching for a deals on good used equipment, or getting a few fields custom seeded are ways to get started.

For novice direct seeders, here is a four-step guideline to getting the most out of any direct seeding machinery, regardless of the opener design:

- distribute the previous crop residue evenly (chop and spread straw, collect or spread chaff, bale, etc)
- do a pre-seed weed burnoff with glyphosate herbicide (i.e., Roundup @ 1/2 litre/acre)
- understand SBU and fertility guidelines for the crops grown (charts are available)
- travel slowly (4-5 mph) and inspect the seed row often (check depth, separation, and closure)

RT LINKAGES is a program focused on improving the environmental and economic sustainability of farming in Alberta. For more information about direct seeding and other reduced tillage practice, check out the web site <http://www.reducedtillage.ca/>.

*Contact:* *Ron Heller*
*(780) 853-8262*
*Fax: (780) 853-4776*
*E-mail: ron.heller@gov.ab.ca*

## 9th annual seminar on Wills & succession planning for farmers & business owners

The Farm Estate Advisory Group has conducted succession seminars with Alberta Agriculture and Alberta Agricultural Societies for the past eight years. This year, specific business and family concerns will be addressed by local professionals. The speakers at each seminar will include a local accountant, a local lawyer and an estate advisor.

"Local experts will be on hand at each of the Wills and succession seminars to answer farmers and farm business owners questions," says Richard Baker, senior advisor with the Farm Estate Advisory Group, Edmonton.

Topics addressed at the seminars include:

- minimizing taxes at death, roll-overs and the capital gains exemption
- ensuring your farm stays intact as a viable operation after you die

*Cont'd on page 4*

- the different options on how to be fair with non-participating children
- having to partner with unwanted siblings, in-laws, or spouses of deceased partners
- ways you can manage their inheritance even after you die
- how to communicate with family/partners so there is business and family harmony before and after the head of the business slows down, retires or dies, and
- how do you know if all of these lawyers, accountants, advisors, etc. are working for your benefit and not their own benefit?

Wills and Succession Planning Seminars - **hosted by the local Ag Society**

| Date | Time | Location |
|---|---|---|
| Bashaw | | |
| November 27 | 7:00 p.m. | Neighbourhood Place |
| Warburg | | |
| January 20 | 7:00 p.m. | Pioneer Rec Centre |
| Medicine Hat | | |
| January 23 | 7:00 p.m. | Cypress Center |
| Nampa | | |
| January 27 | 7:00 p.m. | Nampa Complex |
| Camrose | | |
| January 29 | 7:00 p.m. | Regional Exhibition Centre |
| Tiger Lily | | |
| January 30 | 7:00 p.m. | MTM Rec Centre |
| Berwyn | | |
| February 3 | 7:00 p.m. | Elks Hall |
| Airdrie | | |
| February 12 | 1:30 p.m. | Twin Arena |
| Whitecourt | | |
| February 19 | 7:00 p.m. | Interpretive Centre |
| Westlock | | |
| February 20 | 6:30 p.m. | Westlock & Dist. Adult Learning Centre |
| Wembley | | |
| February 24 | 7:00 p.m. | Rec Plex |

"These succession seminars are designed for the medium to large size business operated by a family or more than one shareholder or partner," adds Baker. "Only five per cent of businesses pass successfully to the next generation, so these succession seminars have been designed for those who want to ensure they pass, or receive, their business onto the next generation tax and cost efficiently."

The cost of the seminars varies, so contact the host Ag Society for admission price, a tax receipt will be provided. Payment can be made at the door. For general inquiries contact, Baker at (780) 487-5202 or e-mail <rbaker@estateadvisors.org>.

*Contact:* *Richard Baker*
*(780) 487-5202*

## New Generation Co-ops – an option for Alberta producers and processors

On April 2, 2002, the new *Cooperatives Act* quietly replaced Alberta's old Co-operatives Associations legislation. Ordinarily, this wouldn't be a big deal; statues are rewritten all the time, but in the final pages of the new Act is a section that defines the new generation co-op as a legitimate business arrangement for agricultural ventures in the province of Alberta.

"New generation co-ops (NGC's) have played a major role in agricultural circles in the U.S.," says Ted Darling, business risk management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Airdrie. "North Dakota is considered the birthplace of the NGC and in the 1990's about 80 co-ops were formed there and in neighboring Minnesota. Many of these are operating successfully and some of them have become household names, such as Dakota Growers Pasta, the North American Bison Co-op and U.S. Premium Beef."

Saskatchewan passed NGC legislation in 1999 and the University of Saskatchewan's Centre for the Study of Cooperatives has become a major resource for Canadian NGC development.

The reason there is such a sudden interest in NGC's is that a new generation co-op can be an excellent alternative for commodity producers who want to work together to move further along the value chain. Through an NGC, a primary producer can own a piece of the processing, wholesale, distribution and retail sectors, with the potential of earning a return on investment from each stage of the process. It's a way to participate in the value added industry and in some cases, successfully compete against some of the really big players.

"New generation co-ops combine some of the best characteristics of regular co-ops and corporations," adds Darling. "NGC's retain the basic co-op philosophy of 'one member, one vote' and a distribution of profits based on patronage. NGC's can issue shares that carry the right and obligation to deliver a specific amount of product to the co-op enterprise. These shares, called designated shares, generally require a significant investment on the part of the member. On the other hand, members delivering their product into the system can expect an annual return on their investment in the form of patronage premiums. In addition, NGC shares are tradable and redeemable, so members can get their equity out of the venture when they retire or decide to leave the industry. Unlike regular co-ops, NGC's can have restricted membership, so if a processing facility is operating at capacity, the only way to become involved might be to purchase or lease delivery shares from someone else."

Part of the new generation co-op movement's success in the U.S. is that times were tough in North Dakota in the 1990's,

*Cont'd on page 5*

just as they are tough in western Canada right now. In tough times, people are more likely to work together and search for cooperative solutions. Another reason for cautious optimism is that the NGC model overcomes some of the inherent problems of regular co-ops, especially those relating to membership equity.

Finally, NGC's present some significant advantages when it comes to fundraising from members and from the community at large. While Alberta's Security Commission regulations are currently under review, it is expected that NGC's will qualify under one or more exemptions. This should allow NGC's to avoid some of the costs and time delays incurred by other business arrangements in raising investment capital.

"Producers and processors interested in researching the new generation co-op phenomenon will find that the Internet is a good place to start," says Darling. "Use your favorite search engine to find any of the companies and terms mentioned in this article, or try some of the links listed below. You never know: a new generation co-op might be in your future!"

Links and References

- Alberta Municipal Affairs – http://www3.gov.ab.ca/gs/services/cnfb/index.cfm#coops
- Dakota Growers Pasta – http://www.dakotagrowers.com/
- North American Bison Co-op – http://www.nabisoncoop.com/
- US Premium Beef – http://uspremiumbeef.com/index.htm
- Alberta Elk Producers Association – http://albertaelk.com/news/index.htm
- Creating Co-op Fever – USDA publication, service report #54 – http://www.wisc.edu/uwcc/info/sr54.pdf
- Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, U of Sask – http://coop-studies.usask.ca/
- University of Manitoba – New Generation Co-op Case studies – http://www.umanitoba.ca/afs/agric_economics/ardi/casestudies.html
- Forming a New Generation Co-op in Manitoba – http://www.umanitoba.ca/afs/agric_economics/MRAC/index.html
- University of Wisconsin, Center for Cooperatives – http://www.wisc.edu/uwcc/

A technical seminar, ***New Generation Co-ops, Alberta's Newest Option for Agriculture Business***, is being held at the Coast Terrace Inn, Edmonton on December 3 and 4, 2002. The seminar will provide information on new generation co-ops (NGCs), what they are, how they work, how they differ from other co-ops. The keynote speaker, Bill Patrie of Mandan, North Dakota, will discuss the success of NGCs in the U.S. and how to organize and develop an NGC. Technical information regarding set-up, financing and management of NGCs rounds out the agenda. For additional registration information, contact one of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's risk management specialists: Ted Darling in Airdrie, (403) 948-8524; Merle Good in Olds (403) 555-4237; Graham Gilchrist in Vegreville (780) 632-5417; or, Linda Hawk, with Alberta Agriculture's agri-preneure action unit, in Medicine Hat (403) 528-5250. Complete information about the seminar is also posted on the internet at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/ecomonic/mgmt/diversification/ngc.html>.

*Contact* *Ted Darling*
*(403) 948-8524*

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# Agri-News Briefs

## Honey masters program

The ***2003 Bee Masters Course*** is being offered on February 10 to 14, 2003 at Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. ***Bee Masters*** is a week-long, intensive course in advanced beekeeping. Instruction during the course covers topics such as season management, nutrition, queen rearing, pollination, diseases, mites, pesticides, marketing and hive products. The course is a combination of illustrated lectures, lab periods, discussions and an optional final exam. Participants should have previously kept bees and have some knowledge about bees and beekeeping. It is open to commercial beekeepers, hobbyists and sideliners. For further information, contact Christine Dempster (604) 291-3012 or e-mail <Conference_Services@sfu.ca>. Offered by the BC Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries and Simon Fraser University, information can also be viewed on-line at <www.sfu.ca/beemasters2003>.

## Farmland values on the rise from coast to coast

Farm Credit Canada (FCC) reported a 2.6 per cent increase in values for the six-month period ending on July 1, 2002. This is the fifth increase in a row and well above the 0.8 per cent gain noted in January 2002. Across Canada, all farmland values improved or remained stable. The Prairie Provinces all reported farmland value increases: Alberta increased by 4.5 per cent, a considerable appreciation; Manitoba increased by 2.1 per cent; and, for the first time since 1999, Saskatchewan farmland value increased by 1.0 per cent. Alberta's 4.5 per cent value increase was second only to Quebec, where a 6.2 per cent rise in farmland value was reported. Copies of the full FCC report are available on-line by going to, <http://www.fcc-fac.ca/english/our_company/media/publications/index.shtml>. FCC reports dating back to spring 1998 are also available on-line and can be used for comparison. For further information, contact Roy Hjelte at (306) 780-3489, Regina, Saskatchewan.

## Call for research and demonstration projects

After a challenging 2002 growing season, it's time to plan for 2003 projects. The Canada-Alberta Crop Development Initiative (CACDI) Lethbridge Demonstration Farm is soliciting proposals for research and demonstration projects. The primary purpose of this initiative is to increase the adoption of new technologies and cropping systems by irrigation producers. Visit the web site at <http://cacdi.eidnet.net/> and select ***2003 Project Call for Proposals*** to view the invitation letter, download a copy of the application form and a 2002 crop plan. For the purpose of allocating fields and long term planning, the Scientific Advisory Committee is soliciting proposals for research and demonstration projects for 2003 and beyond. Please note that proposals are for land allocation only and projects must be independently funded. Deadline for receiving completed applications is December 6, 2002. For further information related to the demonstration farm site, contact Gregg, Dill P.Eng., irrigation specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Lethbridge, (403) 381-5116, e-mail <gregg.dill@gov.ab.ca> or Jim Parker, site manager, (403) 381-5901, e-mail <jim.parker@gov.ab.ca>.

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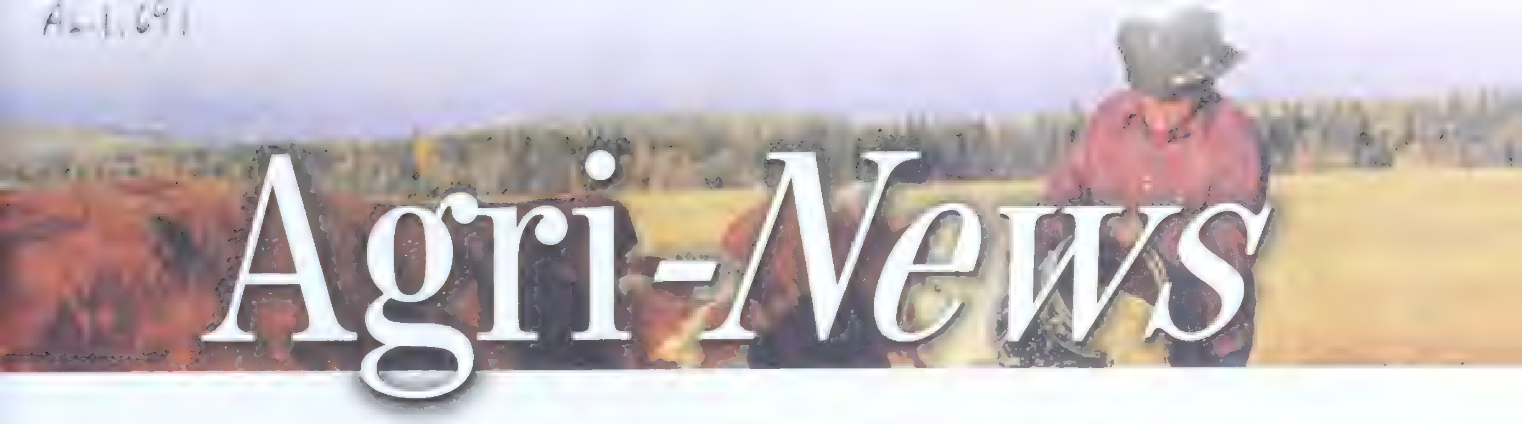

# Agri-News

December 2, 2002

## Urban, rural and young Albertans meet in Town Hall setting

> *"There is an interdependence between urban and rural areas. It's not an either/or situation, but both must be strong to ensure we have a strong province."*
>
> Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development

As one of the co-hosts of the Alberta Town Hall held in Edmonton on November 18, 2002, McClellan positively reaffirmed Alberta's commitment to strengthen the province's rural communities and to include Alberta's youth in setting direction and priorities for further discussion and strategic planning.

Five Town Hall meetings are being held across Canada, hosted by Secretary of State for Rural Development, Andy Mitchell, and co-hosted in Alberta by Minister McClellan. The Town Hall meetings bring together urban and rural residents and provincial youth to discuss key common issues of importance and to find collaborative solutions. Alberta's Town Hall panel included Mitchell, McClellan and Al Duerr, former Mayor of Calgary and chief executive officer of Emergo Projects International. After brief opening remarks from each panelist, questions from the floor were addressed and answered.

"We need strong urban centres surrounded by strong rural communities," said Mitchell. "Alberta, in conjunction with the other provinces and the Federal government, has been working toward a Rural Development Strategy."

Alberta has over 500 companies that process agricultural products. Those businesses provide more than 23,000 jobs and account for $9.9 billion in export shipments.

"Agriculture contributes $16 billion to the economy, and that's a considerable contribution," added McClellan. "What's needed are better understanding, better dialog and better feelings to be fostered between people in rural and urban communities. With less and less attachments to rural areas, the communication gap has grown as well. Including agriculture as part of the curriculum in elementary, junior and senior high schools is a great place to start. When our young people have a better understanding of how important rural areas are and how important to the economy agriculture is, it will help strengthening our entire province."

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## This Week

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The impending Rural Development Strategy will address infrastructure issues such as health, education, social and transportation. Rural development and growth must be supported by sound factors and not artificially based and infrastructure must keep pace with that growth.

"A good national policy will in turn strengthen Alberta," said McClellan. "It is often said that our future is our young people. Only when we are able to overcome some of the obstacles that face rural Alberta, with public policy and partnerships, will it be possible for our young people to see that they have both an economic and a social future in the rural areas. Most of our young people want to stay or return to the rural areas, they just need the opportunities to be able to do so.

"Rural Development is more than just part of the name of the Ministry I am responsible for. Rural development must be a focus for our efforts. It is incredibly important if we are going to move as a province, as a country, in a positive direction."

A draft of the Rural Development Strategy is expected to be ready for release in Spring 2003. This draft will be something that communities and individual Albertans can take, consider and make suggestions on to ensure that the strategy addresses the needs and expectations of rural communities before a finished document is published.

Announcement of the Draft Rural Development Strategy will be carried in ***Agri-News*** upon its release.

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# The F.A.Q.s on FHB

Alberta is currently free from any Fusarium head blight outbreaks caused by *Fusarium graminearum*. If the disease establishes in this province, it would have major economic consequences for Alberta's cereal and animal feeding industries.

"Fusarium head blight (FHB) is the most destructive fungal disease of barley and wheat in Canada," says James Calpas, provincial integrated pest management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "The occurrence and higher severity of FHB in cereal crops in western Manitoba and eastern Saskatchewan is cause for concern. The prevalence and severity of FHB in Manitoba and eastern Saskatchewan has caused major economic losses to producers and the grain export industry.

"This fungal disease greatly decreases yield and seed quality, and it generates mycotoxins (deoxynivalenol). It is estimated that Manitoba now loses $100 million annually due to loss of wheat and barley yield, reduced access to malt and hog feed markets, increased transportation costs associated with sourcing mycotoxin-free grain, and other impacts on end-use processing. Further movement west by this disease would be disastrous for the grain producing regions of western Saskatchewan and Alberta."

To help prevent the introduction and subsequent spread of this disease in Alberta, as well as to avoid the associated losses to Alberta's agriculture industry, *Fusarium graminearum* is officially named a pest under the *Alberta Agricultural Pests Act*.

Exactly what the disease is, how it is spread, what consequences it poses for areas where the disease takes hold, and what measures can be taken to safeguard Alberta farmland from introduction of this disease are some of the most frequently asked questions (FAQs) about FHB and *Fusarium graminearum*.

"The situation leading to the current devastation caused by *Fusarium graminearum* began to develop in Manitoba in the early 1980s," explains Calpas. "In the early 1990s, the disease grew out of control, causing terrible losses in Manitoba wheat and barley fields. The disease has remained a problem ever since and is spreading; it is now well established in southeastern Saskatchewan. As the *Fusarium graminearum* situation in the Prairie Provinces is monitored, doubtless other questions will arise and other protection measures could be developed."

It has been estimated that the field-to-field spread of *Fusarium graminearum* from Manitoba will eventually bring this disease to Alberta in about 10 to 20 years. It is important to recognize that every year that we prevent this disease from establishing in our province, we save approximately $100 million dollars. Prevention will help protect Alberta's industries from this disease until adequate control measures and resistant cereal varieties are developed.

"The best management practices for handling *Fusarium graminearum* infected feed grain are the control procedures outlined for feed grain in the **Alberta *Fusarium graminearum* Management Plan**," says Calpas. "These best management practices to protect Alberta farmland also apply to the handling of hay and straw. The best management practices outline the control measures that limit the possibility of *Fusarium graminearum* moving from infected feed grain, hay or straw and establishing in Alberta's fields."

The **Alberta *Fusarium graminearum* Management Plan** and the FAQs information sheet are posted on the Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/> and are also available by contacting the Alberta Agriculture Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, toll free in Alberta at 1-800-292-5697.

For further information, contact your Agricultural Fieldman, Alberta Agriculture's Pest Risk Management Unit, or the Alberta Ag-Info Centre, 1-866-882-7677.

*Contact: Jim Calpas* *Shaffeek Ali*
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## Limited seed in 2003

The same drought conditions that cut western Canadian crop production by an estimated 27 per cent in 2002 also severely reduced the quality and quantity of seed for 2003. For areas affected by drought conditions for eastern and central Alberta, as well central and northern Saskatchewan, the production of quality seed this year is lower than expected.

Seed supplies of most popular varieties will be short and prices will rise. Prices for some varieties could be double of prices last spring. Seed prices are a function of the market for commercial crops and also the supply and demand for seed. It's a double-edged sword, because besides reducing the seed supply from 2002 production, the aftermath of the drought will be a stronger demand for seed next spring.

"The seed trade normally carries over an inventory of about a third of a season's needs," says Bill Witbeck, provincial seed specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Lacombe. "However, the 2001 season was also adverse and quality seed production was down. Inventory carried over from 2000 probably stands at something closer to 20 to 25 per cent of 2003 needs."

Seed production is highly region-specific. "Pedigreed seed growers and municipal seed cleaning plant managers are excellent contacts regarding local varieties and seed supplies," adds Bill Chapman, extension agronomist - cereals with Alberta Agriculture, Barrhead. "The seed growers and managers are also aware of prices and performance of varieties. Producers should visit their local outlets and check out quality, germination and status of seed, and remember to check for the Fusarium Head Blight test on cereals."

More information on telephone numbers and e-mail addresses are available through the web site at <www.seed.ab.ca> or you can check the recent copy of ***Alberta Seed Guide Fall 2002***. More information can also be found on Alberta Agriculture's web site at <www. agric.gov.ab.ca>, select each crop type and then scroll down to variety information Producers can also contact the Alberta Ag-Info Centre toll free at 1-888-882-7677.

Some seed, especially the newest canola varieties, are being increased in the southern hemisphere in countries like Chile and southern U.S. This is especially true for newest varieties; companies want to produce seed as quickly as possible to capitalize on the market. Some areas are reporting poor germination due to frost in August, so it's important to check around.

"The low seeding rate of canola means that sufficient seed can be supplied from a limited acreage," says Murray Hartman, extension agronomist - oilseeds with Alberta Agriculture, Lacombe. "There were good growing conditions in eastern Saskatchewan, Manitoba and southern Alberta that produced enough canola seed. As always, the newest and most popular canola varieties tend to sell out first, so producers waiting until spring will be forced to buy leftovers. Also, with the second growth experienced by canola growers in the drought area, some seed will have green seed and that can result in vigor problems. Growers should try to select seed lots with lowest green seed content; however, many seed companies blend canola seed lots."

"Pulse crop seed availability may be a challenge in the next growing season. Specific varieties that growers would like to have could be difficult to obtain or simply not available. Many farmers have already secured field pea seed supplies for next year," comments Mark Olson, extension agronomist – pulses with Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton. "Quality of seed and preserving that quality through the handling process will be more important than ever. Dry conditions have resulted in seed with low in moisture content being harvested. Ideally, field pea seed should be handled at around 18 per cent moisture to reduce cracks and splits. The physical appearance of the field pea seed can be deceiving as hairline fractures or cracks beneath the seed coat may not be noticeable, but can dramatically reduce germination and vigor. A seed germination and vigor test costs little and assures you of what you actually have."

The advice to seed users for the 2003 growing season: don't wait for spring to buy seed.

*Contact* *Bill Chapman*
*(780) 674-8258*

## Farmers from around the world coming to FarmTech 2003

***FarmTech 2003*** is the place to be to get the global perspective on farming. "Last year, response was so positive to the speakers from Australia, Chile, and the United States, we decided to do it again," says Janette McDonald, chair of the FarmTech 2003 Education Committee

***FarmTech 2003*** welcomes Francis Forgeard-Grignon from France who will compare his 400-acre farm in France to his 4000-acre farm in Romania. Forgeard-Grignon has extensive farming experience growing barley, corn and peas on three continents. He has worked on agricultural projects in Russia, Saudi Arabia and Libya. His first contact with Canadian agriculture was in 2001 when he came to Alberta to purchase used farm equipment that would fit into minimum cost and reduced tillage farming in Romania.

Also traveling to Canada for ***FarmTech 2003*** is Mario Cappi, who farms 2500 acres in Argentina. Wheat is the main crop on Cappi's farm and he is moving into canola and soybeans. In addition to farming, he works as a private agronomist and farm economist. Cappi will discuss the economic and agronomic challenges and opportunities that exist for farmers in Argentina.

*Cont'd on page 4*

"We hear a lot about farming in South America and Eastern Europe," says Kenton Ziegler, chair of the ***FarmTech 2003*** conference. "Who better to answer your questions than real farmers from those regions?"

***FarmTech 2003*** will be held in Edmonton at the Mayfield Inn & Suites, from January 29 to 31, 2003. The conference features 34 concurrent sessions, Friday Super-Panels, *Farmers Helping Farmers* workshops, and agricultural showcase exhibits and special events. For more information, call 1-866-327-6832 or visit <www.farmtechconference.com>.

*Contact: Farm Tech 2003*
*Conference coordinators*
*1-866-327-6832*

## Post-release monitoring of GMOs

Dr. Linda Hall, research scientist and weed expert with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Division North, Edmonton, was recently invited to presented research findings, at two major international symposia on ***The Biosafety of Genetically Modified Organisms***. This presentation on genetically modified organisms (GMO) was first given in Grossrussbach, Austria and then in Beijing, China.

Hall and her fellow Canadian researchers are making an impact on the global forum on the safety of GMOs in agriculture. Much of the research in the western provinces has looked at how to monitor the plants once they have been released. Canada is the only country that has conducted extensive post-release monitoring, and the large audiences at Hall's sessions demonstrates how interested other countries are in this research.

"Post-release monitoring of transgenic crops can influence future decisions, effectively forming a feedback loop to assist in decision making for subsequent transgenic releases and improvement of experimental designs," says Hall on the significance of the Canadian research. "Additionally, some ecological questions, such as gene flow between crops, may only be answered at a landscape level because of the influence of scale and sampling methodologies."

As some countries have halted the import and field-testing of GMO's and products containing GMO's, the work being done to establish better regulations for human health and biosafety is being closely watched. The recent establishment of the European Commission's standardized regulations for release of GM crops is hoped to allow organizations to meet requirements and market GM crops to Europe in the future.

Topics of discussion at the Grossrussbach workshop included: gene flow of transgenes in microbial and plant systems; difficulties in the European Union; how transgenic crops saved the Hawaiian papaya industry; improved bacteria for bio-control and bioremediation; and, post-release monitoring. The Beijing symposium discussed: gene flow and the consequences of gene flow; the effects on soil microbes; insect management; regulatory issues and explanations of regulatory philosophy; and general issues, including research requirements.

"I believe that developing testing protocols and methodologies to examine the ecological impacts of transgenes, pre- and post-release, should be viewed as a platform technology in support of transgenic crops," says Hall.

Outcomes from both international meetings included recognition of the need for more research, in particular in the area of post-release monitoring.

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## Increasing average sales can depend on what you say

Farm direct marketers are always looking for ways to increase their sales. A noted retail consultant has told many farm direct marketers that it's easier to increase sales by getting existing customers to spend an extra 20 per cent than it is to get 20 per cent more customers.

"John Stanley, one of the speakers at the **Explore Direct** conference in Red Deer this January has advice for direct marketers on how to increase their sales," says Kerry Engel, chair **Explore Direct** conference and member of the Farm Direct Marketing Initiative with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Westlock. "He feels that the easiest approach is to analyze how you start a conversation with potential customers. Your first few words could increase or decrease an average sale by 20 per cent."

Stanley, a retail consultant with over 20 years experience, has research that shows that the lowest average sale is achieved by people who start a conversation with "Can I help you?" or "Are you alright?" Most people are anxious about talking to strangers and their natural response to these questions is, "No thank you" or "I'm just looking." Either of these responses closes the conversation down and makes the sale extremely difficult.

Stanley urges his clients to start a conversation and, by doing that, there's a better chance of increasing the sale. "The easiest way of achieving this is to start your opening statement with one of the basic question words - how, what, when, why or where. One of these simple words can make a big difference to your bottom line," says Stanley.

For example, "Good morning, how can I help you?" could increase an average sale by $2 to $3 compared with, "Good morning, can I help you?" The first statement encourages the

*Cont'd on page 5*

customer to continue the conversation and once a conversation has been started it's more likely that an extra sale will be made.

Stanley works with farm markets around the world assisting them with merchandising, staff and management training, customer flow, customer service and image. "A walk around any farmers' market will quickly identify the top salespeople," says Stanley. "They use what is called emotional selling. They quickly identify something positive about a potential customer and compliment them as they come to their stand. To achieve this friendly banter with customers, you need the right personality. When it comes to banter and sincerity, not all of us have it, but those who do should use it as it's a sure winner in increasing the average sale. Selling is fun, as long as a person has the skills and knows the rules of the game."

At ***Explore Direct***, farm direct marketers will learn how to increase sales and attract new customers, build professional relationships and maximize the effectiveness of their own "brand", and they will also hear about the latest farm direct marketing and farmers' market practices.

***Explore Direct*** is being held in Red Deer on January 20 to 22, 2003. For further information or a program and registration package, call (780) 679-1362 (toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000). Information is also available on the Alberta Agriculture web site at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/diversify>.

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# Agri-News Briefs

## Alberta Pork – annual general meeting

Alberta pork producers will tackle several pressing issues at the annual general meeting on December 4 and 5, 2002, at the Coast Plaza Hotel in Calgary. The issues include the U.S. Farm Bill, animal care in food marketing, air quality and water policy. Speakers including Dr. Larry Martin, CEO of the George Morris Centre; Toby Oswald-Felker, vice-president of public relations Canada Safeway; Dr. Brent Auvermann, Texas A & M University; Dr. Tim Ball, president of Tim Ball and Associates, Victoria, B.C.; Martin Rice, Canadian Pork Council and, Simon Goodwin, president of Shooters Hill Livestock Inc., will help producers understand many of the emerging issues. At the meeting, Alberta Pork will recognize several individuals for their contributions to the Alberta pork industry and celebrate excellence in the industry. About 3.5 million hogs are produced in Alberta each year and agriculture, directly and indirectly, generates one out of four jobs in the province. For more information, contact Paul Hodgman, assistant general manager, Alberta Pork, (780) 491-3529 or Deni Cameron, communications specialist, Alberta Pork, (780) 491-3528

## Electronic tracking

Smaller than a grain of sand, tiny electronic sensors and identity tags imbedded in all manner of products could mean that the age of e-business may be used in some unexpected ways. Experts researching various business applications for computer chips and other e-business techniques say that computer chip technology will soon be available making it possible to track every carton of milk, every bottle of pills and every other manufactured item. Some of this technology is already available and being tested. This type of 'silent electronic tracking' could help with respect to tracking food products for recall and contamination warnings. However, questions surrounding the possible threat to privacy are also part of the discussion on electronic tracking for products from razor blades and cotton swabs to major appliances and everything in between.

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# Agri-News

December 9, 2002

## Cash comes and cash goes

Cash comes and goes all the time in any business. When times get tough, cash seems to go more than it comes. In times of reduced cash inflow, cash flow needs to be managed and monitored more intensely.

"If producers sells their cows, or a portion of their herd, they will be holding cash, but over the next period of time, that balance will be drawn down. It's critical to plan for those draw downs and be prepared for not only expenses that are in place but other expenses that may come along," says Jeff Millang, financial business analyst with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Olds. "An example could be the land payment that has usually been paid off with calf sales in December. If calves were sold earlier and all the cash is gone, what pays the land payment? Another scenario is purchasing of inputs. It's important to know that if expenses are incurred now, there will be cash flow to pay it back later."

Producers need to have a cash balance that can be used for those expenses or be able to secure financing in the form of an operating loan. If financing is used, it will also need to be repaid sometime, and there needs to be a planned revenue or cash source to pay for it."

"Cash flow budgets are not hard to use or create -- they are a forward planning tool and producers only need to worry about what is coming at them down the road," adds Millang. "Determine what the present cash balance is and if there are any big ticket items outstanding (checks that are outstanding) are the first steps. Then begin to detail where the cash is coming from and going to. The list is easy to create and may include items such as family living expenses per month, utilities costs per month, calf sales, cow sales, feed purchases and debt payments. Also, include what month the revenue is generated or when payments are due."

Using a tool like the rolling cash flow forecaster can help producers identify where the cash is coming from and going to. This forecaster can be found on Alberta Agriculture's web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/economic/mgmt/spreadsheet/cashflow.html>. The forecaster helps identify where there may be shortages or surpluses. It can help both the producer and the lender work out rescheduling of payments, the possibility of paying off bills early or arranging for credit before it's needed.

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Cash typically comes from three places:

1. Operations – profit/loss from this years production
2. Investments – sale or purchase of assets
3. Financing – paying down debt (saving interest) or incurring more debt either through equity or financed debt

"With advance planning, there are some ideas that can generate cash flow," says Millang. "These ideas all have other implications, but with planning can be used as an alternative injection of cash."

Cash flow generating options:

- leave the operating credit balance outstanding but negotiate a new or additional line of credit
- term out operating line of credit to intermediate or long-term debt. This will impact debt structure and potential future profitability
- control costs both short-term fixed and long-term costs
- reduce input costs for the current production cycle
- if the business usually uses hired labor, can your own labor be used instead this year
- lease out assets
- engage in off-farm work
- equity infusion from non-farm investments, examples may include NISA account, savings, RRSP's, non farming assets
- sell assets that are not critical to the farming operation

The keys to cash flow management:

- Determine what your cash flow requirements are
- Formulate a plan – prepare several scenarios short- and long-term
  - are assets sold to generate cash – how much needs to be sold?
  - cost control – what can be reduced this year without dramatically affecting production
  - consider restructuring intermediate and long-term debt
- With a plan in mind consult your lenders. They are much more likely to be helpful if they are involved in the decision than if you come at the 'eleventh hour' with no plan. They have experience and have different tools to look at different scenarios and help in the planning process.

*Contact: Jeff Millang*
*(403) 556-4326*

## Livestock Drought Tax Deferral reminder for producers

Alberta livestock producers affected by this summer's drought are eligible for a one-year tax deferral on sales of breeding livestock.

To qualify for this deferral, the taxpayer must meet the following conditions:

- They must carry on a farming business in a region that is a prescribed drought area (all areas of the province have been designated for 2002)
- Their breeding herd at the end of the year must not exceed 85 per cent of their breeding herd at the beginning of the year
- They must be reporting farm income on a cash basis

"The deferral amount available is 30 per cent of net sale proceeds, if the herd is reduced by at least 15 per cent but less than 30 per cent," says Dale Robinson, business management specialist at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Alberta Ag-Info Centre, Stettler. "If the breeding herd is reduced by 30 per cent or more, a deferral of up to 90 per cent of net proceeds is available. The concept of net proceeds is important: if you bought animals worth $50,000 in the spring and sold $100,000 of cows in the fall you would only be able to defer a portion of the $50,000 difference, not the full $100,000."

Please note that under the *Income Tax Act* breeding livestock is defined as "animals over 12 months of age that are held for breeding purposes." Therefore, income from heifer calves born in 2002 is NOT eligible for the deferral. Herd sires used in your own breeding herd are eligible. The livestock species that qualify for the deferral are cattle, sheep, goats, deer, elk, bison and horses for PMU production.

The deferred income amount must be included as income of the taxpayer for the taxation year that is the earliest of:

- the first taxation year after the period where the area is a prescribed drought region
- the first taxation year where the taxpayer becomes a non-resident
- the year in which the taxpayer dies
- the year in which the taxpayer elects to include the deferred amount as income

Please note that the tax deferral DOES NOT APPLY to the sale of the 2002 calf crop.

Using this tax deferral may fit an operation if breeding herd has been reduced in size or if the entire herd was sold. If an operation will be buying breeding stock next year, the purchase expense will be available to offset the income deferred from 2002. If there are no plans for repurchasing livestock in 2003, there is a longer period of time to do tax planning.

To examine how the tax deferral will affect your operation, please consult your accountant. For more information, contact the Alberta Ag-Info Centre at 1-866-882-7677.

*Contact: Alberta Ag-Info Centre*
*1-866-882-7677*

## Alberta Farm Water Program extended

Deadlines for the Alberta Farm Water Program (AFWP) have been extended to help producers suffering from the driest year on record.

Deadline for project completion was November 30, 2002; however, producers now have until March 31, 2003 to complete their projects. The deadline for application submission has also been extended until May 31, 2003, instead of the former January 31, 2003 deadline to submit applications for the program

"Securing long-term water supplies is a vital strategy for producers to protect their operations during drought conditions," says Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

This year, producers in some parts of the province experienced the worst drought ever recorded, and some areas of the province experienced a third, or even fourth, consecutive year of drought

"The Alberta Farm Water Program has been very well received by farmers, but demands on a busy construction industry haven't allowed producers to complete their water supply projects," explains McClellan. "Project contractors continue to be in high demand, creating long waiting lists for water supply projects. The extended deadline should ensure that more producers have the opportunity to benefit from the programs."

AFWP will pay for one-third of development costs, to a maximum of $5,000 per producer, for eligible water supply projects. Application forms are available by calling Rural Services Division at (780) 422-9167 (toll-free in Alberta by calling 310-0000); through the Alberta Agriculture web site <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/farmwater>; or through MLA offices.

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*Rural Services Division*
*Alberta Agriculture*
*(780) 422-9167*

*John Knapp*
*Rural Services Division*
*Alberta Agriculture*
*(780) 427-3338*

For toll-free information outside of Edmonton, dial 310-0000

## On-line shopping with Alberta Agriculture's electronic catalogue

An on-line shopping capability has been added to Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's web site **<https://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/app08/pps/index.jsp>**. Publications, videos and CD-Roms are catalogued on the site and can now be ordered directly from your computer.

"It's always been easy to phone or mail in an order to the Publications Office," says Scott Reid, head of Alberta Agriculture's Information Packaging Centre, Edmonton. "We are very pleased to now offer on-line ordering of both our priced information pieces and free publications."

For priced publications, videos and CD-Roms, Alberta Agriculture accepts VISA and MasterCard for easy e-purchases. For customer security, Alberta Agriculture does not retain charge card information in the database, therefore, customers are asked to re-enter their charge card information each time they place a new order.

"All prices listed are in Canadian dollars," adds Reid. "For U.S. customers, an additional page is available which gives up-to-date currency conversion, <http://www.xe.com/ucc/ucc>. The actual conversion rate on each order will be made at the rate for the day that the order is processed."

The electronic catalogue page on Alberta Agriculture's web site includes on-line help for placing an order on-line and how to check the status of an on-line order, to make the process even easier

"Information on bulk orders and discounts for larger orders and for book dealers is also available on the electronic catalogue web page," says Reid. "If you have questions, comments, suggestions you would like to share with us, please e-mail us at publications.office@gov.ab.ca."

Items from the electronic catalogue <https://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/app08/pps/index.jsp> can also be ordered by phoning the Publications Office at 1-800-292-5697 (toll-free in Canada) or (780) 427-0391. The on-line order form can also be printed and faxed to (780) 422-8835, or mailed to Alberta Agriculture Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6.

This on-line shopping cart is limited to shoppers from Canada and the USA. If you are from outside of Canada and the USA and would like to place an order, please call (780) 427-0391 or e-mail <publications.office@gov.ab.ca>.

*Contact:* *Scott Reid*
*(780) 422-5154*

# Farmers' Market benefits occur on many levels

Over the past few decades, there has been a revival of farmers' markets across North America. Health conscious consumers are demonstrating a desire to get the freshest produce possible, and this has added to the growing popularity of farmer's markets. The benefits of farmers' markets occur at many levels for producer, consumer and the community.

"The reasons why consumers love farmers' markets are plentiful," says Kerry Engel, Farm Direct Marketing Initiative, Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development, Westlock. "Social atmosphere, community support, quality, freshness, taste, appearance, ethnic products and access to organic and specialty foods are a few of the benefits they cite."

For farmers, the benefits include keeping money in their community, keeping the family farm in business, increasing cash flow, diversifying risk, providing an opportunity for part-time venture and higher gross returns. Farmers' markets give producers a chance to have direct contact with and feedback from their customers. They can also serve as an outlet for excess products and a test market for new products.

"Farmers' markets allow communities to get involved in and support the local food system," adds Engel. "They bring people to an area providing more customers for the businesses located nearby."

The ***Explore Direct*** conference, Alberta's only farm direct marketing conference, is being held in Red Deer on January 20 to 22, 2003. Co-hosting by the Alberta Farmers' Market Association has enabled the conference planning committee to offer an entire stream of programming for those selling through farmers' markets.

Philip Powell, General Manager of Ottawa's ByWard Farmers' Market, has some definite opinions about what makes a successful farmers' market. When he speaks, managers and vendors around the country sit up and take note. The ByWard Market is a "hot spot" to visit for both tourists and regulars in downtown Ottawa. Powell believes that farmers' markets reflect community and should be community based and that no two farmers' markets are the same. He describes how to get customers excited about visiting your market and how to work with the community. Identifying what role the market manager has in setting the tone of the market and how to partner for win- win situations are also subjects Powell will be addressing as one of the key speakers in the Farmers' Market stream at ***Explore Direct***. His years of experience and his human approach to designing and running a farmers' market have made him a sought after speaker at national and international conferences.

December 20, 2002 is the 'early bird' registration draw deadline for the ***Explore Direct*** conference. Early bird registration gives you a chance to win two nights accommodation courtesy of the Red Deer Lodge and the ***Explore Direct*** conference committee.

This is also the entry deadline for the Best Brochure Award. All Canadian Gear® is sponsoring the Best Brochure Award. Simply submit your farm direct marketing venture brochure along with your conference registration form by December 20, 2002 for a chance to win fleece wear sporting your business logo.

For a registration package, call (780) 679-1362 (toll free access in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first). Conference and registration information is also available on-line at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/economic/mgmt/diversification/main.html>.

Attend ***Explore Direct*** to maximize your farm direct marketing profits. Conference topics focus on four program streams: farmers' market; new ideas; farm direct marketed meat and planning for change.

Two other special features of the conference include a full-day, pre-conference, Innovative Merchandizing workshop with international merchandizing guru John Stanley, on January 20, 2003, and a Winter Stew Festival that promises to serve up a savoury, simmering variety of Alberta's finest farm direct marketed regional fare is being held on Tuesday evening, January 21, 2003.

*Contact:* *Kerry Engel*
*(780) 349-4466*
*cell: (780) 349-9017*
*www.agric.gov.ab.ca/diversify*

# Agri-News Briefs

## Grain stats handbook

Each year Canada Grains Council (CGC) puts out a ***Statistical Handbook***, including updated information on grain crop acres, yield, production, handling, trade, processing, stocks & prices, livestock production, processing & prices, farm income, census, weather and market information and much more. The handbook contains 10 years of historic data, illustrating trends through information set up in charts and tables for easy comparison. These comparisons show how the Canadian grain industry is evolving and highlights some of the major shifts in profitability, trade flow, demographics, ownership, investment and regulatory environment that have affected the industry. Cost is $100 for hard copy and CD. For further information, contact Erin Holowach, Alberta Grain Commission, (780) 422-0878, Fax: (780) 422-9690, or e-mail <erin.holowach@gov.ab.ca>.

## Managing through drought

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Business Management Innovations Branch, in conjunction with local partners, is featuring two speakers at three locations in Alberta on Dececember 10, 11 and 12, 2002. The speakers are:

**Dr. Tim Ball** – well known climatologist and regular writer for the *Country Guide*, has been recently recognized for voicing his opinion on $CO^2$ emission and the minimal impact the Kyoto agreement will have on it. Ball has a sound understanding of agriculture and its dependency on the weather allowing him to relate the weather trends to the industry.

**David Pratt** – conducts the Ranching For Profit School and Executive Link programs in Canada and the U.S. He has a good understanding of the ecological, financial, and social impacts of drought. Pratt will give attendees some specific actions that can be taken to get through the current situation and to prepare Alberta businesses for the next drought

The proceedings will run from 8:15 am to 3:00 pm each day at:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Olds | Dec. 10 | Olds College Alumni Center<br>(403) 556-4240 |
| Camrose | Dec. 11 | Camrose Regional Exhibition<br>(780) 672-3640 |
| Westlock | Dec. 12 | Westlock District Community Hall<br>(780) 349-4405 |

Registration is $50 (plus GST) per person. For further information call the number listed for the location you wish to attend, or contact Dann Mattson, Agricultural Management Specialist with Alberta Agriculture, (403) 556-4248, Olds

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# Agri-News

December 16, 2002

## Stubble soil moisture - Fall 2002

The extremely dry weather conditions in Alberta this spring and summer continued into the fall throughout central and parts of northern Alberta. In southern Alberta, fall moisture levels are higher as a result of above normal precipitation during the growing season. At this time, about 90 per cent of the provincial agricultural area has insufficient moisture for re-cropping next spring. The driest areas, which are in central Alberta and the northern Peace region, are reporting from 25 to 100 mm below average moisture levels for those areas.

"A provincial survey classified 32 per cent of the provincial agricultural area as very low, which means there is virtually no soil moisture reserve through the root zone," says Joe Michielsen, soil moisture technologist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Lethbridge. "Another 32 per cent was classified as low, which means it's too dry to support a crop without additional moisture before seeding. About 27 per cent of the province, was classified as moderately low, meaning there is enough moisture to start a crop, but above normal precipitation is required to produce normal crop yields. Sufficient moisture levels to sustain a crop were found only in southwestern Alberta, a small area west of Medicine Hat, and south of Valleyview. These areas are in the medium and high categories, but only account for eight per cent and two per cent of the agricultural area, respectively."

In Alberta, the driest conditions in the fall are typically found in the southeastern parts of the province. This fall, southern Alberta was the wettest part of the province. Moisture levels there were variable from field to field because crops there were extremely variable in production. High production areas depleted moisture reserves more than those areas set back by the excessive moisture from the heavy rains in June. October snowfall events contributed to variable surface moisture throughout the province, but they were not enough to return fall soil moisture levels to normal in the central and northern areas. For more information, check the Agricultural Weather Summaries on Alberta Agriculture's web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/navigation/sustain/climate/index.html>.

The fall soil moisture survey and map represent conditions prior to normal freeze-up. When soils are dry in the fall, winter and early spring precipitation is necessary to increase soil moisture reserves to supplement the next growing season precipitation. Because conditions have been so dry this fall, above normal winter and/or spring precipitation will be needed across the central and northern areas of province to reduce the drought risk for next year.

*Contact: Joe Michielsen* *Allan Howard*
*(403) 381-5859* *(780) 427-3594*

A copy of the recently completed soil moisture map is included in this news package

## This Week

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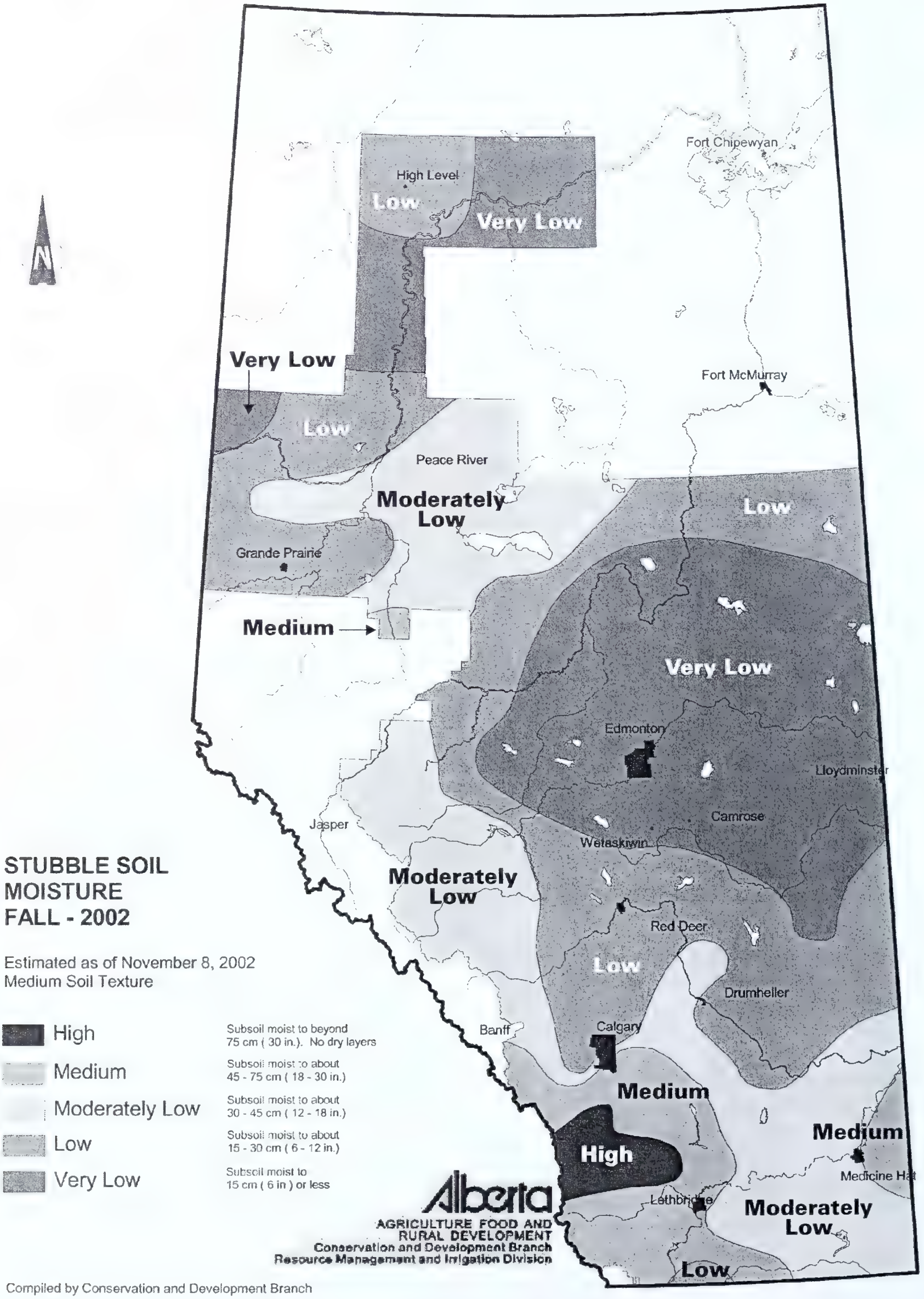
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High Level
Low
Very Low
Fort Chipewyan
Very Low
Low
Fort McMurray
Peace River
Moderately Low
Low
Grande Prairie
Medium
Very Low
Edmonton
Lloydminster
Camrose
Jasper
Wetaskiwin
Moderately Low
Red Deer
Low
Drumheller
Banff
Calgary
Medium
Medium
High
Medicine Hat
Lethbridge
Moderately Low
Low

# STUBBLE SOIL MOISTURE FALL - 2002

Estimated as of November 8, 2002
Medium Soil Texture

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ■ | High | Subsoil moist to beyond 75 cm ( 30 in.). No dry layers |
| ▨ | Medium | Subsoil moist to about 45 - 75 cm ( 18 - 30 in.) |
| ▨ | Moderately Low | Subsoil moist to about 30 - 45 cm ( 12 - 18 in.) |
| ▨ | Low | Subsoil moist to about 15 - 30 cm ( 6 - 12 in.) |
| ▨ | Very Low | Subsoil moist to 15 cm ( 6 in ) or less |

Alberta
AGRICULTURE FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
Conservation and Development Branch
Resource Management and Irrigation Division

Compiled by Conservation and Development Branch

## New manuals create beneficial environmental awareness

"Pork producers and cattle feeders are the first Alberta farmers to benefit from the recent release of new manuals that create greater awareness and understanding of beneficial environmental practices," says veterinarian Joyce Van Donkersgoed, environmental coordinator for Alberta Pork (AP) and Alberta Cattle Feeders Association (ACFA). Both associations, AP and ACFA in association with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, had direct input into the manuals produced for their industries.

Known as beneficial management practices (BMP) manuals, these easy-to-read books cover a comprehensive list of topics ranging from legal issues and conflict prevention, to site selection and planning, manure storage and land application and disposal of farm waste, including chemical and veterinary waste. The BMP manuals are a part of a collaborative effort of industry and government. ***Beneficial Management Practices: Environmental Manual for Hog Producers in Alberta*** and ***Beneficial Management Practices: Environmental Manual for Feedlot Producers in Alberta*** are the first two manuals, and are specific to pork producers and cattle feeders. Additional manuals for poultry, dairy, cropping and cow/calf producers will be completed and released by the end of 2003.

"Most farmers who pick up a copy of these manuals will find that they are already following BMPs," predicts Dale Chrapko, provincial conservation coordinator with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Vegreville. He likes how the manuals provide a quick reference to specific topics and gives farmers a sound selection of beneficial management options. "Let's face it, there are always things we could be doing better and it's helpful to have good ideas in one place," says Chrapko, himself a farmer.

"Early feedback on the manuals has been very positive," says Michelle Follensbee, branch head for Pork, Poultry and Dairy, Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton. "The manuals are very practical, and producers like the way the books document beneficial environmental practices and provide management options."

"The manual will be an excellent tool for producers who are developing environmental farm plans," adds Ron Axelson, general manager of ACFA. "Busy producers need a good way to access sound, up-to-date, technical information, and the BMP manual for feedlot producers will be part of the reference material we use when we conduct workshops to help feeders develop and implement their environmental farm plans."

All BMP manuals will be available through related commodity associations. As others involved in the manuals' design, Tanya Moskal-Hebert, environmental program specialist with Alberta Agriculture, says she is convinced producers will appreciate how balanced and practical the technical information is. "The manuals were specifically designed to assist producers with the implementation of environmentally sustainable management practices," she adds.

"I think farmers are going to like what they see," says Van Donkersgoed. "Pork producers and cattle feeders have long benefited from technical and practical information to protect herd health. Industry and government saw a need to develop similar resources about beneficial management practices related to environmental sustainability. We took a collaborative approach to the manuals and the result is a user-friendly document that gives producers a single source of good information. We anticipate updating these manuals every two to three years with new proven technologies and information on environmental practices and regulations."

For a copy of the cattle feeders' manual, call 1-800-363-8598. Pork producers can call (780) 491-3525. These manuals can also be accessed on-line by visiting the Alberta Agriculture web site:

***Beneficial Management Practices: Environmental Manual for Hog Producers in Alberta*** <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/livestock/pork/bmp/bmp_hogs.html>

***Beneficial Management Practices: Environmental Manual for Feedlot Producers in Alberta*** <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/livestock/beef/bmp/bmp_feedlot.html>.

*Contact: Dale Chrapko* *Tanya Moskal-Hebert*
*(780) 632-5452* *(780) 427-2933*

## The forage potential of Triticale

Triticale is a crop species resulting from the crossing of wheat (Triticum) with rye (Secale). The name triticale was derived by combining the scientific names of the parent crops. Triticale has potential to be used for forage, feed grain, alcohol production and food. The adoption of triticale for forage is seen as having the greatest potential to increase its use in western Canada (Grain Tek report 2001).

"The use of triticale for forage has many advantages," says Mike Hall, technology transfer specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's pulse and oilseed unit, Fort Vermilion. "Spring triticale can yield up to 30 per cent more silage than barley while maintaining good forage quality. This crop can be grown on solonetzic and acid soils and is well adapted to drought and excessive moisture. It serves as a disease break from barley leaf diseases such as net blotch or scald. Triticale has excellent lodging resistance under high fertility and is an excellent nutrient sink for highly manured land."

*Cont'd on page 4*

The development of winter triticale has increased this crop's flexibility as an annual forage. The main advantage of using winter triticale is seen in its extension of late fall or early spring grazing. Winter wheat and fall rye can also serve this function, but winter triticale is higher yielding and more winter hardy than winter wheat and produces pasture latter into the fall than fall rye.

"Winter triticale can be seeded in late summer to provide late fall grazing or early spring grazing the following year," continues Hall. "Using short grazing rotations and an adequate number of livestock to keep the crop vegetative, winter triticale can be grazed throughout the following summer and late into the fall." Another strategy is to seed winter triticale in late summer, graze in early spring, prior to early May, and then let the crop grow for silage or seed. For either strategy, care must be taken not to graze initiated seed heads as they emerge from the crown because this will affect both regrowth and seed yield. If spring grazing is the main objective, then fall rye may be a more appropriate choice. Compared to other winter cereals, fall rye is more winter hardy and provides earlier spring grazing.

Unlike spring cereals, winter triticale can be seeded in spring to provide quality productive pastures from mid-summer to autumn. Again, other winter cereals can also perform this function. Fall rye will provide earlier grazing than winter triticale or winter wheat, but not as much fall grazing. Winter wheat will provide good quality forage, but will not be as productive as winter triticale.

"Regardless of the winter cereal choice, early summer productivity will be low relative to spring cereals," says Hall. "Seeding a blend of winter triticale with an annual cereal in spring will maximize season-long productivity compared to either monocrop. With such a blend, the annual cereal, such as barley, provides the bulk of early spring gazing or silage and the winter cereal provides the bulk of fall grazing. The initial cut for silage should occur shortly after heading. Delaying harvest until the soft dough stage will increase silage yields, but the regrowth of winter cereals for fall pasture will be greatly reduced. It is possible, though risky, that the winter cereal will over-winter and provide a second year of spring grazing, silage or grain."

There are some hurdles to overcome before triticale becomes a widely used annual forage in Western Canada. Seed costs tend to be high because triticale has a large seed. More power is generally required to chop triticale for silage since it can have large stems with high lignin content. Moreover, there is the occasional report that triticale makes poor silage. Harvesting at the milk stage (65 per cent moisture) is generally considered to provide the best balance between yield and quality, however, further study is required to determine the impact of fertility, length of cut and chop on making good silage with high digestibility and animal intake.

"Even before last year's drought, providing feed and fodder for Alberta's expanding livestock has been a challenge," says Hall. "The use of triticale can help meet this challenge by providing higher yields and greater cropping flexibility."

*Contact:* *Mike Hall*
*(780) 927-3712*

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## Horse conference addresses West Nile virus

"West Nile virus (WNV) and subsequent disease from the virus are a reality, even in the province of Alberta," says Dr. William Saville, DVM, Diplomate ACVIM, PhD, extension epidemiologist and large animal internist with the Department of Veterinary Preventive Medicine, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio. "There have been approximately 121 cases of human WNV in Canada in 2002. In addition, there have been over 100 equine cases in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario. The rapid east to west spread in the U.S. and Canada would suggest that Alberta and B.C. are next. The virus is likely in the Western Hemisphere to stay and will be something we have to deal with on a yearly basis."

WNV had never been seen in the Western Hemisphere prior to 1999. How it managed to be introduced into North America is unknown, nor is it known how long it has actually been here.

The virus is a member of an encephalitis virus complex that includes nine viruses, two of which are found in North America: Powassan and St. Louis encephalitis viruses. The epidemiology of WNV is nearly identical to that of St. Louis encephalitis (SLE) virus. While SLE does not cause any remarkable disease in wildlife or mammals other than humans, WNV causes disease and mortality in humans, wildlife (birds, particularly crows) and domestic animals, particularly horses.

"We are very pleased to have Dr. Saville as one of the speakers at the 2003 Horse Breeders and Owners Conference," says Les Burwash, horse specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Airdrie. "WNV is a topic of concern to Alberta horse owners and breeders, and we are fortunate to have an expert on this year's panel who can discuss and explain this disease to us."

Saville's presentation will include information on the history of WNV, clinical signs, pathology, diagnosis and treatment.

A killed vaccine is in use in the U.S., however, the main prevention of the disease at this time is mosquito control. Horse owners are encouraged to protect their horses by:

- eliminating standing water on the property, to prevent mosquito breeding
- housing horses inside at dawn, dusk and night, the peak mosquito times

*Cont'd on page 5*

- avoid leaving lights on inside horse stables in the evening or overnight
- placing incandescent bulbs around the perimeter of stables
- using fans to create air movement over stabled horses
- removing all birds, including chickens, in or close to stable area
- using mosquito repellent on horses
- fogging stables with pesticide in the evening

"Dr. Saville is one of the 15 speakers on the next Horse Breeders and Owners Conference agenda," says Burwash. "The conference offers different programs designed to fit different equine interests. Participants can attend any of the sessions and will receive the printed materials from all sessions."

The 2003 Horse Breeders and Owners Conference is being held at the Capri Centre in Red Deer on January 10 to 12, 2003. The program starts with a wine and cheese reception on Friday, January 10 at 7:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday's sessions begin at 8:40 a.m.

Conference registration is $85 per person. For more information about the 2003 conference, contact Burwash in Airdrie at (403) 948-8538. Government numbers are toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first.

*Contact: Les Burwash*
*(403) 948-8538*

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# Holiday food safety!

Food is ripe for mishandling during the holidays! Our kitchens become as harried as a busy restaurant's as we turn out tantalizing appetizers, main courses and desserts for festive dinners and buffets, for transporting to parties, plus food gifts for family and friends.

We look for ways to get a head start on the cooking, maybe cut a few corners to save preparation time, leave food out on the buffet far too long.

"There are so many ways we can mishandle food over the holiday season", says Jane Carlyle, coordinator of the Food Safety Info Line that provides advice to concerned holiday cooks.

Here are some of the most frequently asked questions the Food Safety Info Line staff is answering:

**What can and cannot be prepared and cooked ahead?** – you can make up a cheese ball a week in advance. Cheesecake will keep a week in the fridge, 6 months in the freezer. But that sour cream based dip is best made up the day it's served.

Eggnog made with fresh eggs should be consumed the day it's prepared while store bought eggnog made with pasteurized eggs keeps longer. Use the Best Before Date as a guide.

Dry and moist ingredients for stuffing can be prepared a day ahead and refrigerated separately to stuff into poultry or a crown pork roast just before roasting. It's unsafe to partially cook food and finish cooking later.

**What's the best way to transport cooked food to a family dinner, potluck or office party?** – fully prepare and refrigerate or cook the food. Then transport in an insulated container either piping hot or chilled to the party. Avoid leaving perishable food longer than two hours in the danger zone between 4 degrees C (40 degrees F) and 60 degrees C (140 degrees F).

**How can I keep food safe and looking fresh on a holiday buffet?** – be sure that cold foods like seafood, fresh vegetables, fruit and salads are placed on crushed ice and that hot foods are kept piping hot on a warming tray, in a chafing dish or slow cooker. Put out small amounts of food and replace often, washing the serving container and utensil in hot soapy water. And, keep an eye out for the guest who double dips. Using smaller size dip accompaniments discourages this unsafe practice.

**I like to make food gifts. What's safe and what's not?** – antipasto is a perennial favorite. But, the traditional recipe cannot be preserved at home for long-term storage. It can be stored in the refrigerator safely for only 10 days. So, label accordingly or freeze for longer storage. You may also can a vegetable relish mixture to gift-wrap with cans of tuna, anchovies, mushrooms and olives for adding just before serving.

Flavored oils are a risky gift. Freshly made, they keep only two to three days in the refrigerator. But, they can be heat processed following very specific directions for storage as long as a month.

Safely processed jams, jellies and pickles can be stored as long as a year after preserving. Be sure to date.

Cookies, which do not require refrigeration, are another safe gift. Be sure to accompany refrigerated or frozen appetizers and sweets with storage, heating and serving directions.

Carlyle says western Canadian cooks can get more advice about the safe handling of holiday foods and how to prepare their turkey from professional home economists by calling the Food Safety Info Line at 1-800-892-8333. The toll-free hot line is answered Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mountain Time.

For more information or a media interview, contact Jane Carlyle, 1-800-892-8333.

*Contact: Jane Carlyle*
*1-800-892-8333*

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# Agri-News Briefs

## Alberta to host the Canadian Alfalfa Seed Conference

The Irrigated Alfalfa Seed Producers Association, based in the Eastern Irrigation District (EID) and surrounding area, is hosting the Annual Alfalfa and Grass Seed Conference on January 12 to 14, 2003 at the Banff Park Lodge. This event is packed with powerful keynote speakers, a trade show, social functions and opportunities to meet others in the industry. Conference presentations will focus on global changes affecting agriculture and specific information on opportunities in Europe and Asia. Speakers include Earl Geddes of the Canadian Wheat Board; Dr. Christian Huyghe from Lusignan, France; Arvid Aasen, who has just returned from China; and, David Wong, market economist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. There will also be presentations updating the latest alfalfa seed production and leafcutter bee management issues; the latest trends in grass seed production and outlook; and, growing native plants for seed that can be used in reclamation and natural environment situations. The conference will be the first opportunity to view the ***Irrigated Alfalfa Seed and Leafcutter Bee Production and Marketing Manual***, a collection of grower experiences and technical information containing approximately 200 pages of text, full color pictures and illustrations. A copy will be on display and can be ordered at the conference. Conference registration details are available from Alberta Agriculture's web site <www.agric.gov.ab.ca> under coming events or by calling Liz (403) 378-4571; Linda (403) 362-2156; or Gordon (403) 362-1310. All growers and industry people interested are urged to attend.

## Range science

Rangeland productivity is increasingly threatened on many fronts by a variety of uses. Increased pressure on Alberta's rangelands from modern society has raised awareness of the need for even better management of these sensitive areas. Leading rangeland research scientists from across North America will be making presentations at the second ***Western Range Science Seminar***, being held in Medicine Hat on January 19 to 21, 2003. Research presented at the seminar will give producers, agency resource managers and policy-makers information needed to make workable, sustainable rangeland management decisions. ***Rangeland Viability*** is the theme for this seminar that includes six sessions that take an in-depth look at rangeland ecosystems; rangeland livestock production; rangeland ecology; rangeland hydrology; riparian areas and forest grazing; and land use impacts on range landscapes, ranching and wildlife. For information on registration, contact Brenda at the Rangeland Management Branch, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Lethbridge, (403) 382-4298; or Dr. Walter Willms at (403) 317-2218, Lethbridge.

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# Agri-News

December 23, 2002

## Food safety and the holiday feast

When preparing a traditional holiday turkey dinner, you'll keep your family safer if you keep four basic food safety steps in mind – chill, separate, clean and cook. Especially at this time of year, it's important to reduce the risk of food borne illness for family and guests.

"Before the preparations start, you have to shop for a turkey. If the bird will be cooked within a day or two, consider a fresh turkey: if not, select a frozen one," says Jane Carlyle, coordinator, Alberta Food Safety Info Line.

For safety's sake, follow the first of the four steps promoted by the Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education:

- **Chill** – the frozen turkey should be stored in the freezer until ready to defrost. The giblets should be removed from the fresh turkey and both should be refrigerated
- **Separate** – the turkey and giblets should be placed on a tray to prevent raw juices dripping onto other foods. Also, use a tray when defrosting a frozen turkey allowing enough time to defrost the turkey in the refrigerator. That's five hours per pound or 10 hours per kilogram.
- **Clean** – wash hands well in hot soapy water before starting turkey preparation and often during it. However, washing or rinsing the turkey before cooking is not necessary and may cause any bacteria present to spread to other foods as well as the kitchen sink and taps. After the turkey goes into the oven, wash the sink and counter where you have been working as well as cutting boards, trays, pans and utensils with hot soapy water and sanitize with a mixture of 1teaspoon bleach to 3 cups water.
- **Cook** – to just the right temperature is what makes the turkey scrumptious. And using a food thermometer is the only way to do this accurately. Roast the turkey at no lower than 325°F (160°C) until a food thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the inner thigh, not touching the thigh bone, measures 170°F (77°C) for an unstuffed bird and 180°F (82°C) for a stuffed turkey. The temperature of the stuffing should also be measured. The thermometer should read 165°F (74°C).

"Continue using safe food handling techniques once the dinner is out of the oven," adds Carlyle. "Remove stuffing from the cavity of the turkey before carving. The turkey, stuffing, gravy

*Cont'd on page 2*

## This Week

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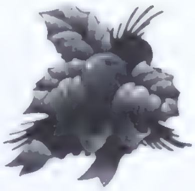

*Happy Holidays!*

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and other leftovers should be chilled within two hours. The turkey should be cut from the bone and the breast sliced to speed chilling. Cooked refrigerated turkey and stuffing should be used with four days or frozen. The turkey can be eaten cold or reheated to piping hot. The gravy should be heated to a rolling boil and used within two days or frozen."

During the holidays, western Canadian cooks can call the food safety experts at the Food Safety Info Line at 1-800-892-8333 to get answers to their questions or concerns. The toll-free hot line is answered Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. Mountain Time, year round. On December 25, 2002 and January 1, 2003 staff will be checking for messages and returning calls throughout the day.

The Hotline has three turkey factsheets posted on its new web site. The factsheets include detailed information on buying, preparing, cooking and handling leftovers. To check the Hotline internet site, go to <www.foodsafetyline.org>.

*Contact: Jane Carlyle*
*1-800-892-8333*
*www.foodsafetyline.org*

## Managing high nitrate feeds

Drought conditions and frost may have caused nitrates to accumulate in cereal crops, or in the re-growth that has started in many fields this fall. Accumulation occurs when the roots are still actively pulling nitrates from the soil and the frost diminishes the plants ability to convert those nitrates to plant proteins.

"Generally, feeds high in nitrates do not have a detrimental affect on monogastrics, such as horses or pigs, but they have the potential to cause nitrate poisoning and ultimately death in ruminants, such as cattle and sheep," says Trevor Wallace, extension agronomist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Oyen. "Normally in ruminants, bacteria in the rumen convert nitrate to nitrites and then to ammonia. The introduction of feed, high in nitrates upsets the balance, allowing nitrites to be absorbed directly into the blood. The excess nitrites impair the blood's ability to carry oxygen, and the animal begins to suffer oxygen starvation."

High soil nitrogen levels, from large applications of nitrogen fertilizer or manure, greatly influence plant nitrate content. Herbicide application may disrupt or interfere with normal plant function and result in nitrate accumulation.

"Cutting a crop as soon as possible after frost damage prevents further accumulation of nitrates," says Wallace. "The percentage of nitrates within the plant will become fixed. By delaying cutting, producers risk even greater nitrate accumulation by the damaged plants; however, the damaged plant is also given the opportunity to recover from the damage, resume photosynthesis and reduce nitrate concentrations through conversion to plant proteins."

Annual crops (i.e. oats, barley, rye, and wheat) and weed species (kochia, Canada thistle, millet, smartweed, and Russian thistle) tend to accumulate greater amounts of nitrates than perennial forages. Annual crops planted into well fertilized, manured or recently plowed grassland or pasture are at a higher risk of nitrate accumulation. Nitrate content will be highest at the milk to soft dough stage.

"Nitrate concentrations vary in different parts of the plant," adds Wallace. "The highest levels are found in the lower stems. Concentrations in the leaves and flowers are lower, and the seeds or grain kernels are usually nitrate-free."

Feed testing (dry matter basis) less than 0.5 per cent nitrate ($NO^3$) can generally be fed safely to beef cows. Feed testing between 0.5 and 1.0 per cent should be fed with caution and symptoms of poisoning watched for. Feed testing greater than 1.0 per cent may cause death in ruminants.

Physical symptoms of nitrate poisoning include difficult and rapid breathing, muscle tremors, low tolerance to exercise, lack of coordination, diarrhea, frequent urination, collapse and death. Nitrate poisoning results in a brownish discoloration of the blood. Due to lack of oxygen to the fetus, abortions following nitrate poisoning can sometimes occur.

"Forages that contain high nitrate levels can be safely fed when diluted in the diet with other forages low in nitrates, or when fed in combination with grain," says Wallace. "Energy from the grain apparently helps complete the conversion of nitrate to bacterial protein in the rumen."

Producers should:

- test all feeds suspected to be high in nitrates
- build animal tolerance to nitrates by frequently feeding small amounts of a high nitrate feed. In this way, producers can increase the total amount of nitrate that can be consumed daily by livestock without adverse effects
- feed forages that contain high concentrations of nitrate in limited amounts several times daily rather than feeding large amounts once or twice a day
- ensure livestock have access to clean water at all times
- follow sound management practices conducive to a successful feeding program when high nitrate feeds are fed
- balance rations to reduce problems from nitrates. Make sure the ration is balanced nutritionally for vitamins (A and E), macro minerals and trace minerals
- not feed hay, straw or fodder suspected of being high in nitrate when it is damp. Damp feed seems to be more toxic because some of the nitrate has already been converted to the more toxic nitrite before being consumed

"Using feeds that contain high nitrate concentrations is not without risk, but feeds high in nitrate can be fed successfully," says Wallace. "Use the management practices mentioned above

*Cont'd on page 3*

to reduce the chance of animal loss. Extensive losses can occur when non-acclimated, hungry livestock are permitted unlimited access to high nitrate feeds."

"Be sure animals are well fed and in good condition before grazing the damaged crop," advises Wallace. "On the first day, let the animals eat from one-half to one hour and then remove them from the area. Observe livestock frequently when they begin grazing to detect any signs of nitrate toxicity. Slowly get the animals accustomed to the crop, so they can become less affected by the nitrate present. Eventually, the animals can be left on the pasture full time. It will take five to seven days for the animals to become adjusted to the new feed. If possible alternative feeds that are low in nitrates can be provided in the pasture to dilute the ingestion of high nitrate feeds."

Observe livestock frequently when they begin grazing a new pasture that is suspected of nitrates to detect any signs of nitrate toxicity.

Test all feeds suspected to be high in nitrates. High nitrate feeds can be fed to animals if managed properly. Testing is essential in identifying safe feed and how to mix different forages and grains to provide a safe ration. The cost of testing is considerably less than the loss of a single animal.

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## Wise manure management pays dividends

The benefits of a sound nutrient management program go way beyond environmental protection. Beef producers may not realize that the manure beneath their feet could slash $7 to $10 per head off the price of the annual fertilizer bill. Dairy producers can expect even more, having up to 10 times more manure than a beef producer. The cost savings and nutrient benefits of manure may be greatly reduced, however, by improper handling of this resource. Delaying manure use, over-application or surface spreading versus incorporation, can result in accumulation of phosphorous and volatilization of ammonia (the loss of nitrogen into the atmosphere)

An updated nutrient management-planning workshop is catching the attention of Alberta's livestock producers. The workshop curriculum was initially written by LandWise Inc and received funding from Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (AAFRD), Alberta Cattle Commission, Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture Program (AESA) and Canada-Alberta Farm Business Management Program

"Nutrient management is a sustainable practice that uses a key resource to benefit a farm's bottom line," says Ron McNeil of LandWise Inc. "The *Agriculture Operation Practices Act* (AOPA) lays out the guidelines that livestock producers need to follow. Under the Act, some producers will need to develop a manure management plan for their operations."

"Participating in the workshop gives producers an outline of the legislation and specific information on land resource planning, using manure as a resource and ideas about beneficial management practices that protect soil, water and air quality," notes Dale Chrapko, provincial conservation coordinator, Alberta Agriculture, Vegreville.

Conservation technicians working with rural municipalities will coordinate many of the workshops planned for this winter. Stuart Holmen, who coordinates conservation programs with seven rural municipalities that comprise the North West Alliance Conservation Initiative north of Edmonton, expects keen interest among producers in that area, "People still have questions about AOPA. These workshops will be a good place for farmers to get answers and to learn what they can do to expand and improve their current nutrient management programs."

"There's a lot of benefit to improved nutrient management planning on the farm, and the updated curriculum shows farmers how to do that," adds Dr. Mohamed Amrani, provincial nutrient management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton. "The workshop also draws attention to potential trouble spots. Some farmers may not know that if they don't pay attention to calibrating manure spreading or injection systems, they could be over or under-applying nutrients to the point where they're not doing any good."

"By introducing comprehensive nutrient management planning, the workshops also help producers complete a detailed component of their Environmental Farm Plan," says Karen Haugen-Kozyra, environmental management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton

"In the past, producers at these nutrient management planning workshops have been surprised by the economics of nutrient management," adds McNeil. "They often say that they didn't know manure was worth so much."

For more information on ***Nutrient Management Planning for Livestock Production*** workshops in your area, contact Alberta Agriculture or the local rural municipality.

*Contact: Dale Chrapko*
*(780) 632-5452*

# Preventing training injuries in horses

Preventing injuries during training is a major topic at upcoming horse conference.

"One of the best ways to prevent horse injuries during training is to understand their cause and then custom-fit the program to avoid them," says Dr. Andris Kaneps, DVM, Phd, Diplomate, American College of Veterinary Surgeons, College of Veterinary Medicine, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio. "Often the type of injury a horse gets is related to the type of training it is doing. For example, harness horses rarely develop bucked shins, while most flat racing horses seem to have shin soreness during their early training period. A dressage horse is unlikely to have a chip fracture, but will likely develop back soreness as it strengthens its back and neck muscles."

A major contributor to injuries among all horses is foot and shoe imbalance. Dr. Kaneps says the foot should be balanced from medial-to-lateral (side-to-side), the toe angle must be correctly conformed to the horse's pastern confirmation, and heel support must be constantly evaluated. "Footing is not easy to change but careful attention to this aspect of training can pay big dividends in your horse's soundness and longevity."

Dr. Kaneps is one of the speakers at the upcoming 2003 Horse Breeders and Owners Conference in Red Deer. "Each year, the conference features top-notch speakers who present information on topics and issues that Albertans in the equine industry can benefit from," says Les Burwash, horse specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Airdrie. "This year, Dr. Kaneps will be one of 15 speakers on the agenda who will be doing presentations on marketing information, research findings and training ideas and techniques."

As well as addressing injury causes and shoeing and footing, Dr. Kaneps' presentation will cover topics such as matching exercise to the foal to best prepare it for healthy adulthood, selected causes of lameness in performance horses, and the importance of early recognition and proper treatment of injuries.

The Alberta Horse Breeders and Owners Conference, organized by the Horse Industry Section of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and the Horse Industry Association of Alberta, is being held on January 10, 11 and 12, 2003, at the Capri Centre in Red Deer. The conference opens with a wine and cheese reception on Friday, January 10 at 7:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday's sessions begin at 8:40 a.m.

Conference registration is $85 per person. For more information about the conference, contact Burwash in Airdrie at (403) 948-8538. Government numbers are toll-free by dialing 310-0000 first.

*Contact:* *Les Burwash*
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# It's the time to enjoy the poinsettias

It's Christmas time and beautifully colored poinsettias are ready to be enjoyed again. "Alberta growers produce over half a million poinsettias every year and the coloring process starts in November under natural light conditions," says Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, greenhouse business development specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton.

"Many growers use blackout curtains in late October to induce coloring so that the plants are ready to be marketed in November, adds Nick Savidov, greenhouse crops scientist at Alberta Agriculture's Crop Diversification Centre South, Brooks.

Consumers, hungry for color in fall and early winter, start buying colored poinsettias in November rather than waiting to buy them in December. This demand by consumers has necessitated a change in growers production practices so that the plants are ready for the market early in November.

"Every year we get enquiries about whether or not poinsettias are poisonous," says Savidov. "They are definitely not poisonous. Studies conducted at various places indicate that poinsettias do not have a poisonous chemical in their leaves and do not leach any chemical that can be absorbed by other plants in combination baskets."

"The marketing of poinsettias has undergone quite a bit of change during the past 10 years," says Mirza. "Smaller growers, who grow around 10,000 plants, generally pre-sell their crops to church groups, schools and other special-interested parties. These groups of buyers usually visit the greenhouse and look at the product they are going to get. This gives them a measure of trust that they are getting good quality plants. These customers are willing to pay a better price than wholesalers, and that means better revenue for the growers."

Once the poinsettias leave a greenhouse, they are exposed to different temperature and light conditions in both homes and stores. Attention should be paid not to over water poinsettia plants.

"Poinsettia roots are very susceptible to rot at the stage when plants are moved from greenhouse to home environment, and over watering should be avoided," says Dr. Ron Howard, plant pathologist at Alberta Agriculture's Crop Diversification Centre South, Brooks. "Water logged conditions in the root zone will result into yellowing of lower leaves and shelf life of plants will be reduced."

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# Agri-News Briefs

## Gentle Horses...Gentle Man

As part of it's 25th anniversary, the Western College of Veterinary Medicine's Equine Health Research Fund (EHRF) has arranged for a one-day seminar by Buck Brannaman on February 1, 2003 at Spruce Meadows' Equi-Plex, Calgary. This is the Canadian premiere of the ***Gentle Horses...Gentle Man*** seminar/demonstration by Brannaman, one of the finest horsemen in North America. He has worked with all breeds of horses and has experience in all performance disciplines. He was the model for the best selling book and movie *The Horse Whisperer* and acted as the film's technical advisor. During the day-long event, Brannaman will start a green, two-year old colt and demonstrate techniques including: earning a horse's respect; communicating with a horse through bit and bridle; interpreting horse body language; and, solving problems in ground training and trailer loading. The EHRF invites all Alberta horse enthusiasts to 'come spend a day with a legendary horseman'. Early-bird registration, prior to January 20, 2003, is $45 (plus GST) per adult and $25 (plus GST) per youth (16 and under). Registration after January 20 is $60/adult and $40/youth (plus GST). Payment must accompany registration. Registration forms can be downloaded from the University of Saskatchewan web site at: <www.usask.ca/wcvm>. For further information or to register, contact the Western College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Saskatchewan, 52 Campus Drive, Saskatoon, SK S7N 5B4. More information is also available by contacting Adele Buettner, AgriBiz Communications Corp. (306) 249-3512.

## 2003 ABP environmental stewardship award

The Alberta Beef Producers' (ABP) highest award for stewardship, the Environmental Stewardship Award (ESA), has been presented to the Chinook Ranch operated by Jim and Barbara Hughes and Stephen and Dawn Hughes. The Chinook Ranch, 5,000 acres near Longview, Alberta, has been in the Hughes family since the early 1950s and evolved from a mixed farming to a 500-cow grazing operation. By developing a grazing management plan that closely resembles patterns found in nature, the Hughes have been able to improve range condition and increase the number of cows on the ranch while keeping input costs down. The judges committee, made up of representatives from both conservation and agriculture, paid special attention to stewardship goals and activities of the nominees, as well as accomplishments in land management, water quality, wildlife, animal welfare and leadership activities in the community. The ABP is now accepting nominations for the 2004 ESA. All cattle producers are encouraged to either enter or nominate another producer who qualifies. Deadline for nominations is July 1, 2003. The ESA is presented at the ABP annual general meeting in December. Nomination forms are available by calling the ABP office at (403) 275-4400.

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